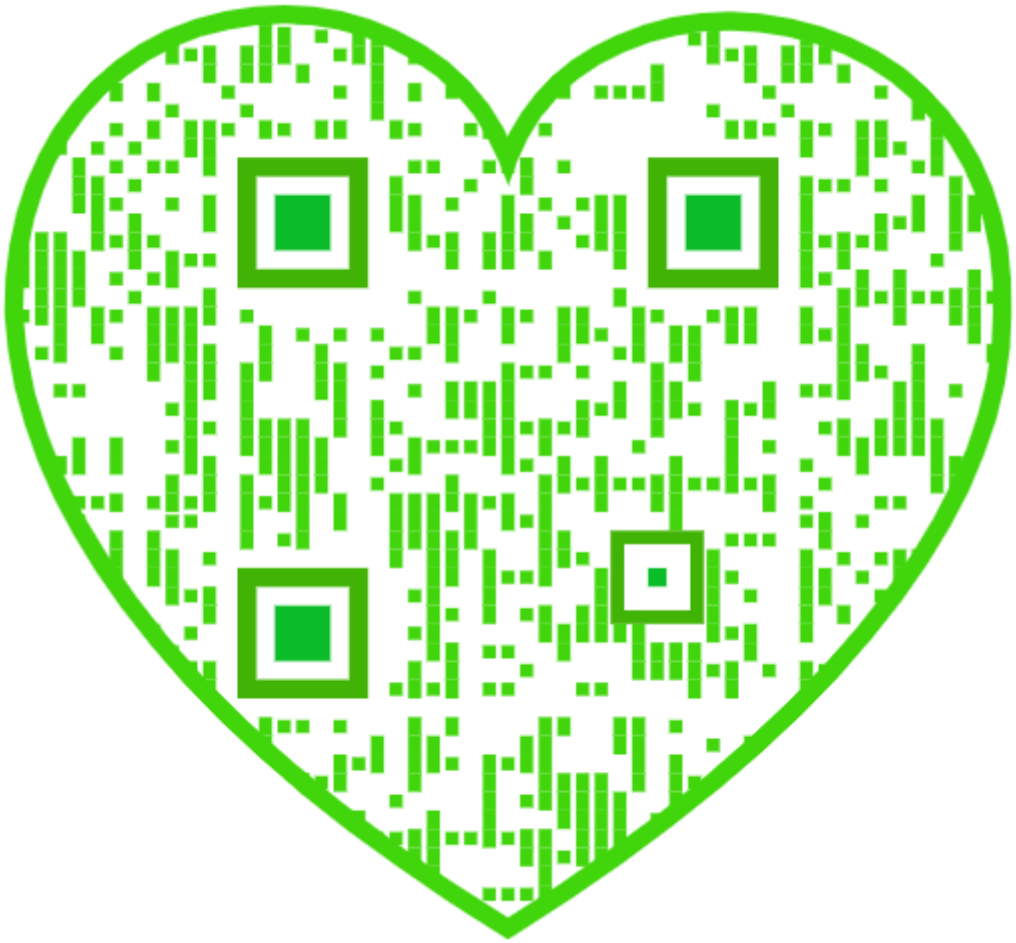

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LETTERS TO YOUNG SPORTSMEN.

First published in 1920.

LETTERS TO YOUNG SPORTSMEN

ON

HUNTING, ANGLING AND SHOOTING.

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. MACKILLOP

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON

AND

THE HON. DOUGLAS CAIRNS.

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ON HUNTING

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. MACKILLOP.

ON HUNTING.—I.

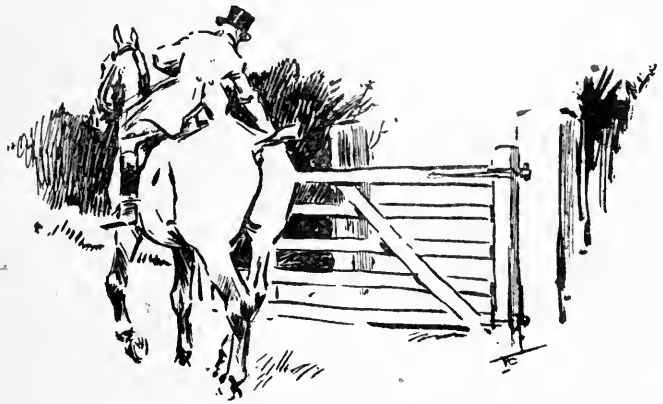
SOME PRELIMINARY HINTS.

THE war has introduced hundreds of young men to the horse in R.A. and R.A.S.C. as company commanders and transport officers, and other ways. They rode and learnt to like it, and now the war is over many will think of hunting who, had it not been for the equestrian side of soldiering, would never have thought of following hounds. To these I write. I disclaim any idea of laying down the law on so complex a subject. The veteran will think it all absurdly elementary, but let that same veteran, not being a soldier, turn at fifty to make up a pay sheet or write an appreciation on manœuvre orders and see what sort of a hand he makes of it. Hunting men made splendid officers. The sport had developed their initiative, confidence in themselves, and the power of quick grasp on situations. Map reading and the use of ground came easy to them.

Those now beginning hunting will never regret having done so, it will open to them a new vista of enjoyment. Hunting improves on acquaintance, gives more than it promises and, after the initial stages are over, is nothing but rewards and rewards which endure till anno domini calls a halt. In the past, boys started hunting on ponies, even in baskets on donkeys. I have seen a baby of eighteen months blooded in a perambulator. This rather unsavoury ceremony consists in the huntsman smearing the child's cheeks with the blood of a newly killed fox. The rite is considered almost sacred in some families and each child is blooded, if opportunity occurs, when first he appears at the covert side. The knowledge of hunting a decade ago was gained during a childhood passed in intimate contact with

those who knew all about hunting, and its ins and outs were absorbed automatically. Now, however, as we are to learn older, we must learn more quickly. So we will go straight to the meet with our budding foxhunter. Later, perhaps, we will touch upon the purchase of the right class of horse for various countries, horsemastership, hounds and riding to them. By the way, remember you ride "to" foxhounds and "at" staghounds. Goodness knows why. Another opportunity may occur to enlarge on bitting, saddlery, equipment and so on. A few days' hunting, however, with our eyes open will make these later hints all the more easy to follow. Before going to the meet consult a good large scale map. They can be got of most hunts with names of fixtures and coverts shown clearly. Your map reading knowledge will now be found useful. Get the lie of the country, its boundaries, rivers and natural features in your head. Try to fix the position of coverts in relation to each other and to villages, railways and the like. When you get home at night (and half the pleasure of hunting is the contemplation of the day's doings), go over the country covered with the map in front of you, trace where you have been and note the coverts drawn. On the fateful morning start early enough to go steadily to the meet, at a walk, or at best, a collected trot, and use what grass you can on the roadsides. Nothing is worse than clattering helter-skelter to the covert side, like a butcher's boy delivering meat. Never jump a fence, school a horse or lark over a line of country going to or from a day's hunting. Something always happens; you cast a shoe, lame your mount, or fall off and the horse puts his foot through your new silk hat. I can remember all these troubles happening to me in the days before I learnt sense. Remember you may tax yourself and your horse to the full. Even if hounds never find a fox, you may conceivably cover forty miles home and back again and be eight hours in the saddle. When you come across the Master of the Hounds at the meet or covert side for the first time each day, raise your hat to him just as you salute your commanding officer. The Master of Foxhounds is your commanding officer for the day. I have seen a Royal Prince raise his hat to a commoner and rather a common

commoner at that. A Master of Hounds is as much in command of his field as a captain on his quarterdeck. If he has any special wishes, or even whims, regard them. Pay your subscription early, find out what you should pay and pay it, it won't get less by waiting. It would not be well to speak to the captain of the *Shamrock* while steering that vessel in the race against America, but it would be wisdom itself compared with speaking to a huntsman when hunting hounds. Say what seems to you best, say he has the most level pack of hounds you ever saw, you can't get wrong in that direction. But this should be before the hounds move off or after the day is over; between times he has enough to do and think about without listening to your views. Avoid doing any damage—you will gain more credit by closing a gate than by jumping



YOU WILL GAIN MORE CREDIT BY CLOSING A GATE THAN BY JUMPING ONE.

one, when hounds are not running; when they are I know you will not be the last man and therefore you can leave gate-closing to old gentlemen and second horsemen. In these days of shortage of farm labour it is often difficult for farmers to catch stock up when hounds are about. If cattle stray on to roads or into cultivated fields, the inconvenience and

REMEMBER TURNIPS ARE AS VALUABLE AS PINEAPPLES.

START ON A MADE HUNTER. HE WILL TAKE CARE OF THE BIGGER FOOL OF THE TWO.

damage are often great. Learn to know seeds and newly sown crops. Remember turnips are as valuable as pine-apples. A good deal of your happiness will depend on your mount; more of this anon, but start on a made hunter if possible. I mean a sensible, clever old boy who knows all about the game. He will have to take care of the bigger fool of the two. You will learn more quickly on a staid old horse than on a more showy and less experienced animal. Above all, do not have anything to do with a kicker; a horse which kicks will do more damage in a second than a season's repentance will atone for. What a dreadful thing

MONEY CANNOT REPLACE A GOOD HOUND.

it would be to kick the sacred person of the Master, or even his horse, but the final and complete, never-to-be-forgiven, crime would be to kick a hound, to kill him and spoil his chances of handing on those splendid and wonderful qualities with which his carefully chosen parentage has endowed him. Money cannot replace a good hound. Hounds have very little idea of getting out of the way, not being frightened of being kicked, as hunt servants' horses are always quiet with them. If by any chance you must ride a kicker, tie a red ribbon to his tail and keep out of everyone's way. To ride a kicker is

bad enough, but to approach hounds on him is unforgiveable. Some people seem to think that by putting up a red ribbon, all responsibility on their part is done with, and barge into crowds at gates and gaps, in which position it is difficult for the victim to get clear, even if he does see the red tag.

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE VICTIM TO GET CLEAR EVEN IF HE DOES SEE THE RED TAG.

If you can hunt from your own home, do so. It is better to hunt in a moderate country from your own door than to go to a tip-top country away from home with all its attendant expense and inconvenience. If you can afford it and are not bound to any home pack, of course there is nothing to beat the classic Shires. Strictly, the following hunts compose this delectable area: Quorn, Cottesmore, Fernie's, Belvoir, and Pytchley. There are many hunts known as provincial packs which have many of the advantages of the Shire packs but are not quite the hub of the hunting world. The Shires are the metropolis of hunting. Take such a centre as Melton Mowbray. From it you may do your six days a week with ease. On Monday the Quorn, the following day the Cottesmore are within reach. On Wednesday the Belvoir, on

Thursday Mr. Fernie's are convenient. On Friday you may turn again to the Quorn, and back to the Cottesmore on Saturday. This was what could be done before the war, and perhaps very much the same can be done now. In the provinces take York for example, and there are many centres as good. On Monday and Tuesday you can hunt with the York and Ainsty, on Wednesday with Lord Middleton's, on Thursday York and Ainsty again, on Friday the Bramham Moor are always quite near, and on Saturday you have Lord Middleton's or the York and Ainsty to choose from. I would advise you to hunt when you can, not pick your days. You may select a good meet and have bad sport, and have a good gallop from an unfashionable fixture.

I wonder if a few words could be ventured on that much thought of but rather delicate subject, the habiliments of the chase. Nearly all the best men to hounds I ever knew were rather dressy out hunting. Any old things do for shooting, but there is a sort of pageantry of the hunting field which it is well, for many reasons, to uphold. You are never wrong with a black or dark grey frock coat or one of somewhat morning coat cut—I mean rounded at the corners—cord breeches, and plain black top boots. Never wear coloured or polished tops on your boots unless you wear white breeches and a silk hat. Of course, leathers and pink are much too serious a subject to discuss now. A silk hat is always right with black coat and cord breeches. It is the best headgear at all times, except in the cubbing season, when it is never worn and anything of the rat-catching order does very well. The foreigner is bewildered at the silk hat in the hunting field, but no more practical head covering could be found. The protection given by a hard tall hat is very great. After a blow on the head from a low branch when jumping a fence the hat may be a bit concertinaed, but the concussion has been taken by it and not by you. Many a man's neck has been kept intact by his silk hat when he has fallen plump on the top of his head. But a silk hat must fit, as, indeed, must all hunting garments. A boot also should fit, but be big enough round the calf and in the foot. I defy the greatest thruster to thrust in a boot half an inch too small round the calf. Pride may force him to get it on,

but the agony, cumulative and persistent, will get him down before the day is out. Let the boot be big in the foot, big enough to take a thick sock. If your feet are ever cold, they will be cold on horseback. The contact with the stirrup iron accounts for this, I think. One hears it said, "Don't hunt in spurs at first." Well, don't if you have no pride, but a spur sets off a well cut boot, and without them no man looks properly turned out. But have them without rowels, cut them off flush. It is rather an Irish remark, but only a fine horseman should wear sharp spurs, because he is certain not to touch the horse with them. There is a good deal to be said about spurs and other means of coercion and what horsemen call the "aids," but these we hope to touch on later, when we reach riding to hounds and horsemanship, not the advanced *haute école*, but practical everyday hunting horsemanship. Those of you who have struggled thus far with me will surely complain that this is a woeful chapter of "don'ts," but if you commit no offence against the tacit understandings and general etiquette of the hunting field, no one will guess you are new to the game. We will leave more advanced mysteries till another day.

II.

THE FOX AND THE HOUNDS.

IN the previous letter we had arrived at the meet, and nothing up to that point had occurred to suggest that we were not old hands. Unless something of a game is understood by the spectator much of the enjoyment is lost. We watch and read of cricket with interest because we know the rudiments of the game, if we are not all entirely familiar with the science and niceties of it. Baseball may be quite as good a game, but the first time we see it, not understanding what it is all about, we fail to appreciate its points and the whole is a mixed-up affair. So it will be with hunting, and in the following lines I will try to convey to you how the game is played by fox, hounds and huntsman and, finally, by that larger but less important body, the spectators. It is quite easy to recognise the officials. The huntsman, whips and second horsemen, also the Master, invariably wear red coats and velvet hunting caps. If it were not for hunting the fox would have disappeared from these islands long ago, as did the wolf and wild boar. In non-hunting countries he has many enemies and few friends. But in hunting countries he is preserved and gamekeepers are paid certain fees every time a fox is found in their coverts. Foxes move about at night; like dogs, they have big stomachs and slow digestions—as opposed to the horse, which has a small stomach and quick digestion—and sleep all day. They roam far and wide after dark, and in their marauding expeditions learn to know the country like a tax collector. At certain seasons of the year they go for miles, and "travelling" foxes usually give the big historic gallops. In the daytime they mostly occupy holes in the ground, called "earths," made by themselves, or artificial "earths" put down for their

accommodation. Occasionally foxes do not occupy earths. These are called "stub bred," and lie out in willow beds—most uncomfortable places, unapproachable and waterlogged. Some few live in hollow trees and odd places, but 90 per cent. may be said to live in "earths." After a night's foraging (and it is a great mistake to think that foxes are always after farmers' chickens; they live largely on vermin, rats, hedgehogs, and so on) the fox returns to his "earth" to sleep off his heavy meal. It is pretty clear, therefore, as we go hunting in the daytime, that unless something is done, all the foxes will be underground and unget-at-able. Therefore, notice is given to keepers and professional earth-stoppers that on a certain day such and such area will be hunted, and they, after the fox has quitted the earth and before he has had time to return, block up the entrance to the hole. This is called "putting to." Finding his ingress is barred, the fox will "lie out" in the coverts,

COILED UP AND ASLEEP.

that is, coil up somewhere and go to sleep. Let us leave him there and say a word on hounds.

You will wonder, perhaps, why so many hounds are required to hunt a fox. Hounds hunt by scent almost entirely. Of course, they will run in view till they lose sight of the fox, when they drop their noses and hunt by

scent. If scent were always good few hounds would do well enough; any pack of curs will hunt a fox if scent is good enough; but scent is often faint and catchy good in covert or bad out, and *vice versâ*. When scent is bad one hound may pick up the line and bring the others to it, and in drawing for a fox an odd hound "hits off" the line and the balance of the hounds join in. To hunt a country four days a week sixty couples of hounds used to be thought not too many. Nor were they, as hounds will not turn out too often; their feet may be damaged, and for many reasons some may be kept in kennels. Since the war many packs are much depleted, hounds having been "put down" in deference to the Food Controller. Later in the season brood bitches are laid up and the pack further reduced. Some huntsmen hunt all bitches together on one day and all dogs on another, and do not mix the packs till late in the season, when, from shortage of hounds, they must. Other huntsmen mix the packs, putting in a few big bitches with the dogs and a few small dogs with the bitches. Bitches are apt to be flighty; dogs work closer, the latter help to steady the bitches, but bitches undoubtedly sharpen up the dogs. The main idea is to get the best hunting qualities out of each. Hounds are very expensive to keep, and if you want to do a real good turn and become popular, "walk" a puppy—that is, after he is weaned from his mother, take him or, better still, take two, and keep them for a few months till they are old enough to go back to kennels and form the new entry for the coming season.

The foxhound is a lethargic, lazy-looking, handsome animal at the covert side, serious and sagacious, no playing about or gambolling like other dogs. But when running a fox he is a different article altogether, full of dash and drive and, when closing up on a beaten fox, with his hackles up, tremendously fierce and keen. I have seen foxhounds when used for stag hunting, go for a stag at bay time after time and receive some cruel wounds from his horns. Foxes in coverts are found by what is called "drawing" for them. Hounds are put into covert and spread themselves out, and one or another is likely to put the fox on his feet. A huntsman usually, if it suits the covert and agrees with the direction

A HUNTSMAN . . . DRAWS UP WIND.

he wants the fox to go in, draws up wind to give the hounds the advantage of the wind, if the wind is not too high. If it is and there is a good deal of noise in the tree-tops, he would not draw up-wind, because a fox might be "chopped"—that is, pounced upon before he had got on his legs. The object of hunting in the regular season is to provide runs and kill foxes at the end of them, not to "mob" foxes in

A WHIPPER-IN IS PLACED AT SOME VANTAGE POINT.

covert. One would, perhaps, imagine that it would be a good way to get the fox out by cracking whips and making a noise, and not by putting hounds in covert at all. But a fox well found is half killed, and huntsmen like hounds to find and "come away" with their foxes. I know lots of coverts in Ireland, and some in England, which are just

a small square of gorse or whins planted specially for foxes, and if there are likely to be several foxes in it, the huntsman blows his horn and cracks his whip and often a fox quits; he then lays hounds on, does not disturb the covert, and gets a better start close on his fox; but it is a bad thing for hounds; their heads are always up, and they will not draw well when wanted. Good hounds are known by their drawing qualities, trying here, trying there. If they gaze about, scratch themselves and roll about, they had better be hanged. Some odd hounds, however, are very good on the line, but won't draw, and hang about the huntsman's heels; but they have to be very good hunting hounds to avoid the rope. A whipper-in is usually placed at some vantage point at the corner of the covert from which he can see both sides, and another or a second horseman at some other point from which he commands a view of a fox "breaking" covert. These are to "holloa" a fox away—that is, give the huntsman warning when a fox quits. The duties of whippers-in and the art and abuse of "holloaing" need a word, but of this later. The huntsman, and the huntsman only, goes into covert if it is of any size, with hounds, and by voice and horn draws the pack to places which have not been tried and cheers them on a fox when found and gets them out of covert as quickly as possible if a fox is "holloaed away."

Get familiar with the sound of the huntsman's voice and know what the various weird noises mean and what the "toots" on his horn imply and then, though you do not see him, you will know what is going on. "Hound language" is very difficult to explain, as these sounds have no equivalent in spelling. "Yoicks," "Forward on," "Hark to Rover," and so on are only used in poetry and on the music-hall stage in sporting revues. A man would need lungs like a gladstone bag and a larynx of brass to shout "Yoicks" very loud and often. Let me try phonetically to convey what language the huntsman employs. As he puts hounds into covert he usually says "'Eu in there," and when inside, "toite, toite," or something like it, as he draws the pack towards any particular spot, "Lu, Lu, Wind'im, wind'im" (English, smell him out), with an occasional single staccato note on the horn. If the

covert is " blank," *i.e.*, no fox, a prolonged swelling note calls hounds out of covert. When all are out he blows a long single note—for the whips who, when the covert is blank, go in and crack any remaining hounds on to the huntsman. If a fox is found the huntsman encourages hounds with " Hi, tally'o, Hi, tally'o " and a double note on the horn, known as " doubling the horn." The huntsman knows the sound of the hound which " opens " first on a fox,

BLOWING THE " GONE AWAY."

that is first to " own " the scent and give tongue, then he shouts " 'Ike to Rattler," or whatever the hound's name may be, and other hounds turn to the one who " owns " the fox. When the fox quits cover or " goes away," as it is called, the huntsman blows the " gone away," two short notes and a long one, repeated several times, and as

the pack tumbles out of covert he shouts "Forrad away, forrad away!" If one of the whips "views" a fox away from covert he "holloas"; a shrill, clear cry, which thrills you as nothing else will, when you come to know its import. For some extraordinary reason the whip thrusts his finger in his ear when he holloas, goodness knows why, but they all do it. Also do huntsmen very often when they "toite toite" hounds to them in covert. If a fox "breaks" but doubles back to covert the whipper-in sings out "Tally'o bike" (back) and cracks his whip. While all this is going on the field will be outside the covert all close together, a Master will marshal all horsemen where they are least likely to head a fox. Sometimes in drawing big coverts the field will follow up the centre "ride" if there is one. Do not detach yourself from the remainder of the field and wander about or you may "head a fox," that is, turn him back into hounds when he tries to "break," one of the greatest possible sins. When hounds find there will be a Niagara-like rush to the first gate or easy place in the first fence, therefore, unostentatiously nose your way up to this bolt-hole, or up to the front of the cavalcade in a "ride," because if you are not near the front the pack may be half a mile off before you have got through after waiting your turn. When hounds find, get a move on; I do not say gallop off in diametrically the opposite direction to that in which hounds have gone, but get clear of the crowd and you can look about you and decide what to do. There are many ways of seeing a run—riding on your own where hounds go, known as "taking your own line," following some trusted pilot who knows the country and will get along fairly well through gates and gaps or, worse still, attaching yourself to the road brigade, who trot along the roads and see what little they can from its rather unenviable security. Later we will touch on these various methods. Also on the sins of skirting and point riding in an attempt to anticipate the line likely to be taken by the fox, often resulting in heading him in the open, and spoiling the sport of everyone else.

III.

SEEING SPORT.

WHEN last we parted the fox had been "viewed" away and each of us had to decide what method he meant to adopt to keep hounds in sight or see as much of the sport as he could. Before tackling these important matters a word is, perhaps, as well as to what you should do if, by chance, you see a fox "break" covert and no one else is with you. If you are anywhere alongside the covert, keep close to it, not wide out in the adjoining field. The chief idea is to let the fox get well away before you move or utter a sound. If the huntsman can see you, just hold up your hat; he will come soon enough, that is if hounds are not busy with another fox in covert. If the huntsman cannot see you, wait till the fox is a good way off and then "holloa." If you do it too soon the fox may double back, and that is a calamity, because the first fox away is usually the best, as he thus shows some dash, and probably knows where he is bound for and will go there straight. Straightness is an essential to all good runs; unenterprising, short-running foxes are a nuisance. I know a good sportsman who says he always tries to say the alphabet to himself before he "holloas" when he has viewed a fox away, but so keen and full of excitement is he that he has never reached S yet. After you have "holloaed" watch the fox as far as you can see him, note the precise spot where he crossed a drain or went through a fence. If the huntsman comes to your "holloa" and hounds do not "settle" at once, he will want to know exactly where you saw him last. If you try to explain and are not quite clear, mistakes will occur, just as they did in the old musketry school days, when we tried to fix a spot in the "indication and recognition" practice. You may know just where the fox went but not be able to point it out in a moment of

excitement so that the huntsman will understand exactly. If the fox is lost during a hunt it is dangerous to "holloa" if you see one, because, unless you have considerable knowledge of the game, it is difficult to recognise the hunted fox, and you may put the pack on a fresh one, which is most annoying when the hunted fox may be threading fences and running short, as foxes do when sinking. Though I counselled you to keep forward in the cavalcade when hounds were drawing, once the fox breaks covert you, being well up to the front, sit still and quiet till hounds have really settled on his line. Another time to stand still is when hounds check or hover when running a fox.

Now about the three methods of seeing the sport which were mentioned in concluding our last letter. Road riding is inglorious and soon dismissed. I think half a mile behind, or half a hundred, is worth all the road riding there ever was. Still, there are many good sportsmen who command our respect, though possibly not our admiration, who never leave friend Macadam's rather inglorious security. They know all about hunting, the pedigree of the individual hounds, the line of half the foxes in the country. But my letters are to "young sportsmen," and the road is no place for them—at any rate for the next forty years. Not that old gentlemen are always found there, by any means. I once saw in Ireland a wiry little man on a young, high-couraged, blood horse, slipping him along with the best. He was close on eighty years of age! The road is the place for nurses with children in tub-carts, fat people on ponies, and second horsemen—which latter should be there a good deal more than they are. Now for the class which follow hounds wherever they go, but some distance behind, and with this class perhaps you will find yourself at first, so get to know them. They are acquainted with the likely run of foxes, the fords in all the streams, the easiest place in half the fences in the country, all the gates and every path for miles. On bad scenting days and with ringing foxes they see all there is to see, and sometimes more than some of the "thrusters." If you want the best description of a hunt they can always give it you. They jump all the places, or most of them, which are jumped by the forward brigade, or rather section,

IF THE HUNTSMAN CAN SEE YOU JUST HOLD UP YOUR HAT.

DO NOT TAKE ANYONE'S PLACE AT A GAP.

because the company in the very front is surprisingly select, even in the biggest of fields. This division will tackle a very awkward obstacle rather than be put out of the hunt, so do not imagine you will be on the flat if you stick to them. They are the real backbone of every hunt, good sportsmen all, really fond of hunting for hunting's sake, revelling in hound work, and viewing with keenly critical and knowledgeable eye every cast the huntsman makes. Full of enjoyment of the chase, they pretend to no great things, are not the least jealous, and lend a helping hand to all in distress. There are one or two axioms to keep in mind when you ride in the second flight. Do not take anyone else's place at a gate,

gap or easy place in a fence; it is not sporting. Wait your turn. Never jump a fence close behind anyone else; see them clear away on the other side before you jump. Often your horse is impetuous with being kept back and will rush in and follow another horse quite close. You cannot, perhaps, stop him at short notice and may jump on the man in front if his horse happens to fall. If anyone gets off to open a refractory gate (and, by the way, get off and open a fair share yourself), let him get on his horse again before you move away an inch. If you move off even slowly his horse will follow yours, and he will be hopping along with one foot in the stirrup and the other perhaps ankle deep in mud. If you can catch a riderless horse and take him back to his owner, do so; it is a Christian act, and you will appreciate the kindness after running half a mile in top boots across a ploughed field like a gigantic rice pudding.

YOU WILL APPRECIATE THE KINDNESS AFTER RUNNING HALF A MILE IN TOP BOOTS.

Next we come to the van, the first flight. Anyone can be with them; there are no reserved seats; but this taking a line of your own is a more difficult thing to excel in than almost anything in the wide realm of sport. It can be no more taught than writing a novel can be. It either is or is not in a man. It looks so easy, sweeping along, never in a hurry, keeping up with hounds however fast they run, without apparent effort, always jumping the fence exactly in the right place, just where the take-off is best and where the landing is safest. If hounds bend they always seem to turn towards rather than away from this fine exponent of the game. Even has he time to unlatch and swing back many a gate. Hounds come out of every covert on the side which he has chosen. All seems so simple. It is not always the good horsemen who have this gift. Many fine horsemen have not got it, nor ever will have. If a man has it and happens to be a fine horseman he is undefeatable. I shall always remember a very little man and very fat, who had this intuitive gift in a marked degree, who, provided he did not fall off, was hard to beat. If he did fall off, no power on earth would put him up again, unless he could climb on some object as high as the saddle. I never saw him ride at an impracticable place at a fence, and I knew when hounds turned they would turn to him. He chose his ground and, in spite of his weight, got, in the very first flight, to the end of many big runs. But though his head was long his legs were very short and his "deck hamper" enormous, coupled with the fact that he rode big, powerful blood horses, he was often jumped clean off, and a "peck" unshipped him like an orange. I recommended him to put a strap through each of the breastplate D's and across the pommel of the saddle; this he gripped as the horse neared the fence, and it saved him scores of falls. I do not advise gripping anything, because if you suddenly let go a horse's head he is as likely to refuse as not; but his horses were so perfect they never knew what refusing was. Still, he had an almost uncanny gift of riding to hounds. Many men will ride behind those who actually cut out the work, jumping every fence and going where they go, full of courage and determined to see

A TIRED HORSE IS A DANGEROUS CONVEYANCE.

the fox killed, but who, if hounds were running across Hyde Park, would, if alone, lose themselves in doubt as to through which arch they should go at Hyde Park Corner. I know steeplechase jockeys, men who have ridden in half a dozen "Nationals," who could not stay with hounds half a dozen fields if they ran fast and no pilot was handy. I never knew a pudding-headed man who was a first-flighter. A good man to hounds is quick-witted and observant, decisive and self-reliant.

Remember—and it is a comforting thought withal—that a good horse, if fresh, can jump anything you dare or should put him at. A tired horse is a dangerous conveyance, of course, but you will soon know when he has had enough. Three feet six of timber, strong creosoted rails, absolutely unbreakable and unyielding, looks a formidable obstacle, but almost any horse or pony could hop over it. Open water or a clean-cut drain 12ft. wide appears, in cold blood, a positive arm of the sea; still, every stride of a blood horse at a gallop on the flat covers nearly twice as much. A high, hairy fence, with goodness knows what on the other side, looks forbidding enough, but the combined weight of man and horse, say 1,400lbs., has a good deal of smashing power, and the drain beyond is not likely to further any agricultural requirement by being at the outside more than 4ft. wide. The horse, if sailing on, would clear half as much again in his stride. A wall is seldom more than 3ft. 9ins. high, but if mortared on the top what a serious proposition it is; but the "take-off" is always good and landing sound. Walls are the safest jumps of all. No one would or could build a wall on boggy ground, nor alongside a drain. All the above obstacles to our progress are within the powers of any moderately good horse, provided always that the "take off" is good. Out of deep plough, up-hill, any horse can fall over a brush fence; while taking off from a muddy hedge bottom, poached by cattle and ill defined, the best horse may make a mistake. A pumped-out horse may fall over anything. You must and will have falls; a few do no harm, to show you how easy they are; but what we are out for is to get over the country without falls. I have hunted for

thirty years, in England and Ireland. With much gratitude and wood-touching, I fail to remember but one fall which kept me out of the saddle. The fall that did me in for some time was from a horse slipping up whilst galloping on a road. And I never yet broke a bone. It's all luck. I have gone half a season and never had a fall, and have had three "bursters" in a morning. As regards the art of falling, there are two text-book rules: "Never part company with your horse till the last moment, and never leave go of the reins." I agree with the latter, though it's not so easy, but I disagree with the former. When falling, if you stick like glue to a horse till the last moment, he is as likely as not to pin your leg under him, and in the effort to get up kicks you or rolls on you. He won't do it knowingly. If you think he may fall, but are not certain, sit still by all means if you can, because if you lurch forward your extra weight suddenly applied will put him off his balance when he might otherwise save himself. But if it is plain he is going to fall, roll clear. In ordinary falls I think horses seem to fall on the left side; then you shoot on to your left shoulder, roll over and get up before the horse. This is the commonest and easiest fall of the lot. Where to ride at fences, the pace required for different varieties of obstacles, the use of ground, and other tips I hope to inflict you with on another occasion.

IV.

RIDING A COUNTRY.

IN concluding my previous letter I ventured to say that I would touch in this upon how to get a horse across country. Let me try to give you some "tips" which I have found to be sound in practice. The audacity of this appals me! How to ride a run! I might as well set out to show you how to paint a picture or write a sermon. Still, as my readers are "young sportsmen" they will not know more than I do, and may know less. In this letter it will not be possible to go into the questions involved in how to get a bad horse over a country; so, to make any progress at all, it must be presumed you are mounted on a perfect horse; nothing less will do in this letter. The mount then will be perfection, have manners, speed, courage, discretion, be able to negotiate the biggest and most awkward of fences, never refuse and never tire. You will never again be on such a horse; because he does not exist, so make the best of him. Hounds have found, there is an undeniable scent and you have got a good start. On a still day the fox may take any direction. If there is much wind he will not run long facing it, eventually he will turn down or, at any rate, across it, because he will find that the scent being blown back to the hounds will enable them to run too fast for his liking. Therefore, if you can remember—I seldom can—ride on the "leeward" or down wind side of the pack, you will then have the advantage of the turn which the fox will make sooner or later. Never ride in the wake of hounds if you are near them; they do not like galloping horses close in their rear. Foxhounds, despite their dash and drive, are really rather timid; they will, if pressed, try to get out of the way and not pay all their attention to the scent.

A good deal of England and Ireland was once under the plough, and the relics of that period are still to be found in most grass countries by the presence of ridge and furrow—those corduroy-like undulations in the fields. Do not gallop across these broadside on, because they take a lot out of the horse and will almost shake the life out of you. Of course, our mount, being perfect, has the best of action and the most beautiful shoulders

DEEP PLOUGH SOON PUMPS HIM.

and floats over these ridges like a carriage on Cee springs, but a less perfect animal will pitch and roll like a ship in distress if the ridges are taken from the top of one to the top of the next. Ride them aslant if you cannot take them lengthways. Many ploughed lands ride very light, especially those on sandy soil, and do not take much out of a horse, but deep plough soon pumps him, and after rain it is cruelty to animals to gallop over deep plough; therefore, drop back to a trot and ride up the wettest furrow, if it goes your way—the wettest furrow has always the soundest bottom. You may get splashed, but all attempts at cleanliness are cast aside when hounds have once found. Ease your horse uphill and spin him along down. This beautifully balanced horse will sail downhill without taking anything out of himself and will gallop down quite a steep incline, if you ride him straight down and not sideways. A good horse will get down the steepest banks at a walk, you will be surprised how steep, if you let him have his head and sit still. Get hold of the back of the saddle if you feel like going over his head. His fore legs won't crumple up, and if he slips and you sit still, he just sits down on his haunches and thus takes the "way" off. If you remember this you will often, if you have confidence, get down steep places that half the field won't tackle, and thus frequently save a big detour.

If, towards the end of a fine gallop—something really good, which you are naturally most anxious to see the end of—your horse is pretty well done, do not hesitate to gallop up the middle of a hard road. I do not advocate anything but a deliberate and collected trot on roads, and not much of that, except under these specially important circumstances: a couple of hundred yards on a road, when hounds are running hard parallel to it, just gives your horse a chance of getting his wind, and you may thus get to the end of a run which you might otherwise lose. On a beaten horse the soundness of a hard road has a wonderfully recuperative effect. Do not gallop on the grass at the sides of the road when hounds are running alongside, because both you and the horse will be watching them and the horse may put his foot into those little grass-grown grips which drain the road. An imperial crowner will be the result. If the run is at nice hound

pace and gates come in your way or, indeed, if you have to go a bit wide to open them, do so by all means, but in a real sharp "dart," when hounds are running without semblance of a check, leave gates alone, unless the pack is bending towards

LEAVE GATES ALONE.

you and a gate can be used with advantage and without delay. Watch the leading hounds and be ready to pull up if they check. Be quick to incline to the direction in which they bend. If there is a little fence, jump it in preference to a big one.

Every ordinary horse wants riding differently — of this more later—but our present mount just wants sitting on and no more. But, good as he is, give him every chance,

do not let him go too fast at anything; he may chance on a bad take-off anywhere and, unless he is going collectedly with his hind legs well under him, he may jump too soon or get too near to his fences. If he is going too fast he may be all abroad on landing and overjump himself. At an ordinary brush fence, not slashed and laid—that is, where the binders have not been half cut through and threaded along the top of the fence—you can sail along at a fair pace, nothing of the tearing gallop, but something rather more than a canter and less than an extended gallop.

Beyond every bush fence may be a drain and the little extra speed will help you both over it. If the fence is slashed and laid it is formidable, because, though it will bend, it will not break, and if your acme of perfection in a moment of carelessness chances and knees it, down you come. Let him go along steadily and well within himself, so that, if he wants to, he can put in an extra half stride if he finds it necessary. This is called "timing" his fence well. If you see anyone going at a fence like mad, you can take it for certain he is frightened—it's a sure sign. Do not ride at fences, however, in a cringing, half-hearted, apologetic sort of way, but resolutely, and withal collectedly. Collectedly—a good, expressive word, so bear with me in its repeated use. On the other side of any fence there may be wire, which you may see from your extra elevation. You may want to pull the horse sharp round or hounds may have turned short alongside the fence, so you must have your mount well in hand and under control. Timber turns more riders than anything else, and I do not wonder. There is something so hard and nasty looking about it. But a good horse deals with it wonderfully easily. The take-off and landing of necessity will be good and well defined, but ride distinctly slowly at it, down to a trot, if the horse is clever and generous, because the difficulty he has is to judge his distance from it. I think this must be because he can see through the rails. Now, a wall is much safer, though it may be higher. Horses never seem to make mistakes at them. In Galway I have seen some of the most awe-inspiring walls jumped. With a loose topped wall you can take all sorts of liberties, because a barrow-load of stones may be knocked off and no harm done.

If you hunt in a country like Meath, one of big ditches, gallop like blazes between the ditches. You can, because the enclosures are big and the going good, but pull up at the ditches; let the horse potter down as low as ever he will, as if he were about to smell the filthy water they usually contain, till you think he will topple in. Then let his head go, give him a slight kick in the ribs

THERE IS SOMETHING SO HARD AND NASTY-LOOKING ABOUT TIMBER.

or, better still, squeeze him; a strong heave and a half stroke on the opposite bank and up on top and away. I am not referring to the ordinary ditches, but the big ones 20 ft. or more on the top; they are called "meering fences" in Ireland, which divide adjoining farms, and are big and evil enough to divide continents. This is the only way I know to get over

them. If you gallop at them you simply land "phut," like a dab of mud on the further slope, and its odds on your horse slipping back into the slimy depths. Then it is a job for those useful but expensive gentlemen who follow on foot called "wreckers," with their ropes, who follow in Meath and charge for their assistance according to the depth of the drain and the position of the horse in it. By the way, if your paragon gets into a drain, deep and boggy, and is apparently fast, don't stand on the bank and haul at the reins and encourage the horse to come out at once. Let him lie there a bit, he may be blown and not willing to try; after he has got his wind he may come out all right himself. If he struggles now he may get deeper and faster. I never used to enter into final negotiations with the wreckers of Meath till I had given the horse a few minutes to see if he would come out without their assistance.

The narrow banks of Cork and Limerick want some doing; slow again is the word, your perfect horse pauses, pops on top, kicks back and launches you into the next field—in my view, the finest sensation in all sport, the "feel" of that powerful kick back and smooth glide to earth wants some beating. One of the most impressive obstacles is the "big double," met only in Ireland, often in Meath, sometimes in Kildare and Tipperary, a fine example of which is to be seen at Punchestown. You must have a bit of pace at this. Picture a big, wide drain in front of something like a haystack, the oblong, not the round, variety. Taking off from the edge of the drain the horse jumps against this. I say against because no horse could jump right on top. Having got half way up, a couple of quick, short strokes puts him on top. From this position, if fright does not make us close our eyes, as it always did me at first, we see another wide drain, formidable enough in itself, but aided by his elevated position, the horse springs out and across and away into the field beyond. The ordinary brook, with the water visible and bank high, is a bit of a poser. Here you may go as fast as you like, and if you have no other guide as to its width, jump where hounds cross, it will be where the fox crossed and he would try to get over at the narrowest place. Willows, or near a tree, mark the soundest places. Be careful jumping under the boughs of trees. There

may seem plenty of room, but if the horse jumps big, a broken hat, if not head, may be the result. If hounds check during a hard gallop and seem likely to be some time in picking up the line, get off your horse. The relief on being rid

WILLOWS MARK THE SOUNDEST PLACES.

of your 12 stone or 14 stone dead weight will be immense. Also, dismount if the pack go into a covert and seem likely to hang about a little; you can soon get up again if the fox leaves. Gallop fast on sound ground,

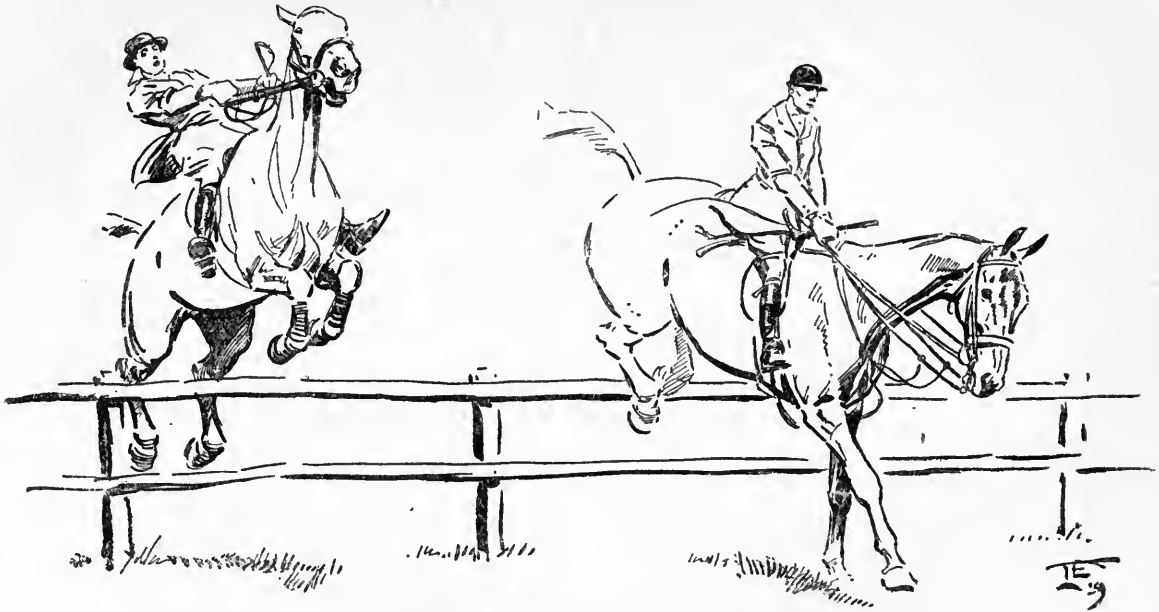
along headlands and paths, trot in deep ground and up steep hills, spin along downhill, watch the leading hounds, ride collectedly at fences, and use every turn hounds make to your advantage, keep cool and good tempered and you will not be very far away at the finish.

V.

BRIDLE AND SADDLE.

IT is high time that you and I came down to earth and stern realities. With the utmost abandon we have flourished over the cream of Leicestershire, dealt with its bullfinches, oxers and water; it was but child's play. The walls of Galway and Badminton held for us no fears. The "narrows" of Limerick, the ditches and "doubles" of Meath, were as naught in our wild career. But it was all like riding a hunt from the railway carriage window. How easy does it seem to sweep from fence to fence, to select the right spot in each. No sooner do we drop, light as air, into one field, than the way out of it suggests itself in a flash. Nothing causes a moment's delay; no pack ever existed that could shake us off. But let us cast from us these vain imaginings and get to practical business. One hears a great deal about "hands," that quality most essential to horsemanship. The principal means of communication between man and horse are from rider's hands to horse's mouth; and whether the horse goes pleasantly and safely or the reverse depends on the touch conveyed. There are good hands and bad hands, light and heavy, restraint without pain or irritation or pull devil pull baker, which means discomfort, danger, lost temper and the possible, nay probable, spoiling of a good horse. Good "hands" are the outcome of touch and sympathy. A motor driver has "hands" when he changes speed on a hill, from top to third, double clutches, and skims upward without the click of a gear tooth and without imperceptibly changing the motion of his car; and the man has none who fails to change till his "revs" have fallen too low, thrusts in his third with a scream when engine and gear speeds are

worlds apart, and finally finds himself on bottom speed when third should have seen him up the hill. I dare say "hands" equally apply in flying, as they certainly do in yachting. If you throw your braces over the bed post and pull at them, the bed post pulls at you; stop pulling, and so does the bed post. Let us, then, consider a moment or two the bridle, which is the means, or at any rate, the most important means, of communication between the horse and ourselves. There are bits and bridles in scores. The double bridle is the one used nine times out of ten in this country and therefore we will touch on this only for the present. It consists of the bit and the bridoon, or snaffle and curb as they are called in civilian parlance. The snaffle should be thick in the mouth and usually not twisted. The curb a short-cheeked variety known as the Weymouth. This bit should be also thick in the mouthpiece and low in the port, *i.e.*, that portion which is arched in the middle of the mouthpiece. The leg of the bit should be quite short and stumpy. Longer legs are used to get greater leverage. An ordinary groom can, and often does, make half a dozen mistakes in putting on a bridle, any of which makes your horse unpleasant to ride and irritable. The mistake few grooms ever fail to make is tightening the throat latch far too much; it should be so loose that you can get a doubled-up fist in easily. It should hang down almost to the angle of the jaws. If tight, it catches the horse in the windpipe when he "bends" to your hand as a well "nagged" horse should. Nagging is the common name for training a horse to carry himself well and move properly. A "nagsman" is he who teaches the horse. The four reins and bridle should be sewn on to the bit and snaffle and on to the bridle, not buckled. A groom may say he cannot clean a bridle sewn on to the steel. If he cannot, he should be a cabman, not a groom. Another failing of grooms is hitching both bit and bridoon too high in the horse's mouth It is a long time since I was at a cavalry riding school, but, from memory, regulations said that the mouthpiece of the bit should be "one inch above the tush in the mouth of a horse and two inches above the corner tooth in a mare." The tush is that canine-looking tooth on either side which appears as if it did not belong to the horse at all. I do not



BAD AND GOOD "HANDS."

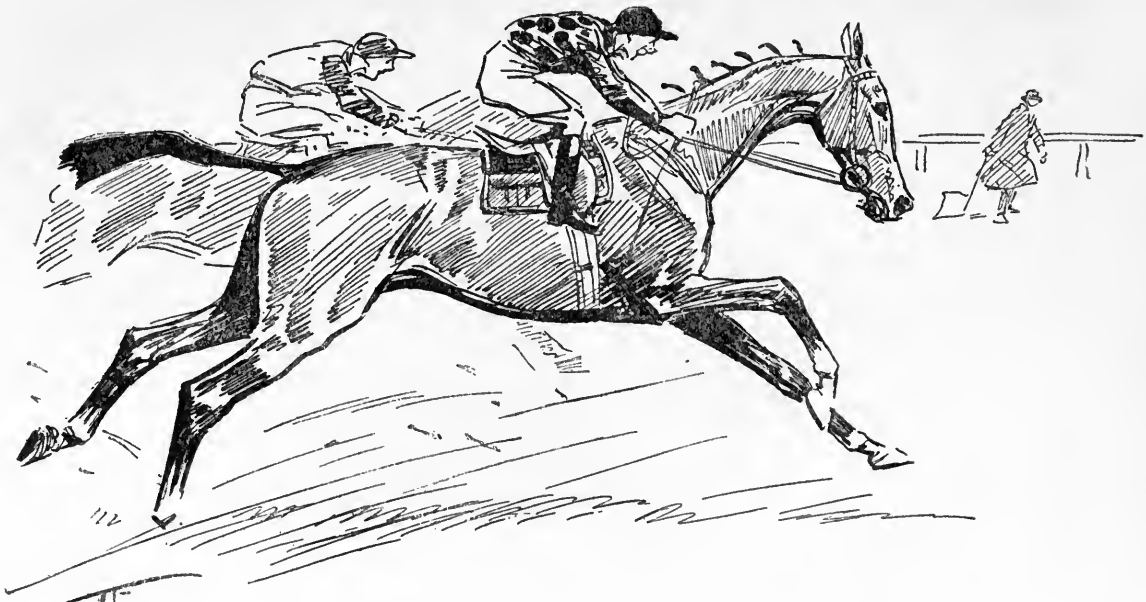
remember anyone ever telling me why it was there, probably it was provided by a kind Providence to show where the mouthpiece should rest, like that little hollow below your knee, which was made to show the tailor where to put the top button of your breeches. The snaffle lies just above the bit, but quite half an inch below the angle of the lips, and never so high as to wrinkle them at all. Now, nature has provided another guide, that is, the groove behind the chin, in which the curb-chain is obviously made to rest, neither above nor below it. The curb-chain should be so loose that the leverage is not applied to the horse's mouth till the pull of the reins brings the leg of the bit almost horizontal. If you look round these points you will have a comfortable ride, the horse will go pleasantly and the proper functions of the bridle be correctly performed. The groom, however, will fail to appreciate any of these niceties and will discourage you from practising them. But do not forget that most grooms are bad riders, from the fine horseman's point of view. Now, this bundle of leather called reins is very difficult to hold properly and effectively. You feel at first like playing the harp. When I was first starting to ride, one of the finest horsemen I ever knew showed me how to hold the reins for nagging, bending and schooling a horse, and I always hold them so for all purposes. If you do not like it, do not do it. Suppose you bend the arms at the elbows as if you were running, fists doubled, all knuckles to the front. Put the snaffle reins between the first and second fingers, one in either hand ; put the curb reins between the third and little fingers, also one in each hand. Now turn the hands inwards till the backs are upwards, and pass the ends of the reins under the thumbs. If you press with the thumbs the reins are fast and will not be drawn through your fingers when the horse pokes out his nose. If you want to ride him on the snaffle you hold the little fingers forward, thus lengthening the curb reins ; if you want to " feel " his mouth with the curb reins, you bend the wrist and bring the little fingers back, thus tightening the curb rein. If you want to shorten all the reins at once to take a pull at the horse, divide the hands apart and let the reins slip, and you shorten them automatically as much as you like. On reading this over it seems most fearfully involved, but bear with me and try

again. If you want all the reins in one hand, just open the left and lay the reins in the right across the palm of the left, close the thumb and all is tight and cannot slip. Would we were together with four straps and I would show you and you would grasp it in a second. The idea is, you can apply snaffle or curb, together or separately at will, also shorten the reins in an instant. I know of no other way of shortening the reins which enables you to do it so quickly as this, and not in the process let go your horse's head. A plain snaffle with a single wide rein is a good thing for beginners, as there is not much to think about. In Ireland almost all horses are ridden in plain snaffles. In England one sees them but seldom. All racehorses are ridden in plain snaffles; the reason being that racehorses are taught to go "up into their bridles," that is, to pull or, at any rate, bear considerably on the reins. The jockey on the flat is perched up on the top of the saddle, certainly not in it, and maintains his balance largely by the support from the reins, which is exactly what we should try to avoid in ordinary riding. The racehorse is trained to go with his weight on his forehand to give his powerful quarters their full propelling advantage for the attainment of speed. The hunter or hack has his centre of gravity further back, well balanced between forehand and hind quarters, so that he may have poise to enable him to jump carefully and at short notice. The steeplechase horse is also almost always ridden in a snaffle bridle, but, again, his forte is speed primarily, and his fences are taken in different form from the deliberate style of a careful hunter, which may have to jump a dozen different fences successively.

There are bridles in scores and bits in dozens all guaranteed to effect a cure on the most confirmed offenders in the way of boring, pulling and so on, but the need for their use will not arise with you unless you buy a horse with these faults. About the most common article of equipment, not being a necessity, is the martingale. It consists of a strap which loops on to the girths under the horse and coming up between his forelegs, divides and goes to each rein, either the snaffle or curb reins, and is attached to each with a biggish ring, through which the reins run easily.

A martingale is fitted, often very promiscuously, without much regard to whether the horse needs it or the rider understands it. Of course, a horse, a bit of a star-gazer, which carries his head high, will go better with a martingale, which tends to keep it down. Also, no doubt, for a puller who pokes his nose out, it is an advantage, because the martingale makes the pull of the reins in a downward direction and the bit acts on the "bars" of the horse's mouth and not on the angle of the lips where a good deal of the power is lost. The bars of the mouth are where all bits should rest. They are those gaps between the incisor or picking up and biting off teeth in front and the grinding teeth above. It is just a portion of gum unprotected by anything, rather high and sharp and easily hurt by the bit. In young horses it is so sensitive that they have to be "mouthed" with a wooden roller or thick iron tube, like a child with a teething ring, until the bars have become hardened enough to bear a bit. When a horse is a puller and borer it is usually caused by bad "hands" which have "calloused" the mouth so that it has lost its fine sensitiveness. If the horse is well "nagged" and good mannered he wants no martingale, that is, if the rider has good hands and keeps them in the right place. If you do have a martingale, it must be sufficiently long to reach up to the angle of the jaw when the horse's head is in the right place. This will be fully 4ins. longer than the ordinary groom fits it. If you have a martingale, see that the reins are not buckled on to the bit; if they are, the ring of the martingale may get over the buckle on the rein and then the horse's head is pinned sideways and anything may happen.

Of all the exasperating things that can happen in our stable are sore backs; the horse is fit and well, but on account of an injury to the back, always caused by the saddle, we are not able to hunt him. Our friend the groom again. I may seem hard on them, but, for a class which professes so much, their ignorance is woeful. Of course, the good groom is a treasure; the man who gets his horses fit and keeps them going saves us worry and money at every turn. It is no use talking about saddles and their fit unless, from the outset, we have some little knowledge of the structure of the bony and muscular frame which carries our weight. The horse's backbone is



THE JOCKEY ON THE FLAT IS PERCHED UP ON THE TOP OF THE SADDLE, CERTAINLY NOT IN IT.

movable upwards, downwards, and from side to side. The spine is a little arched, high from the neck and withers and falling towards the hind quarters, with the ribs projecting from it. The spine bears the weight indirectly, but that weight is applied where the ribs are covered with muscles and

THE DELIBERATE STYLE OF A CAREFUL HUNTER WHICH MAY HAVE TO JUMP A DOZEN DIFFERENT FENCES SUCCESSIVELY.

protected from injury by them. The skin may be injured by the saddle being hard or uneven or not distributing the weight on the horse's back; the saddle is on the back many hours and, with the weight of the rider, presses

continually, thus driving the blood from the surface and reducing circulation, irritating the skin and causing galls. Every saddle will not fit every horse. The principal place to look for trouble is just in front of the saddle under the arch of the pommel. When you are on the horse's back raise yourself till standing in the stirrups and then see if your fingers will go in underneath. It is no use doing it when you are sitting back in the saddle, because your weight towards the back cocks up the saddle in front and deceives you into thinking all is right. If there is not plenty of clearance, the horse's withers will be pinched. Remember, a saddle may fit a horse early in the season when he is fat and lusty, but as he fines down with work the same saddle will want re-stuffing. The ridge of the spine all along the back must not be touched even ever so lightly. Even a roller, that broad band which goes round the horse in the stable to keep his clothing on, will, if it touches the spine, often injure the horse's back. The proper weight-bearing place is on either side of the backbone on the muscles of the back and loins. Therefore, see that the saddle is so stuffed that the channel all along is well clear of the spine, and that the portions down the sides under the flaps are so padded out as to fill the hollows in rear of the shoulder blades. If, when the saddle is taken off —mind, do not take the saddle off till the horse has been in the stable some time and cooled down, and let the groom dress him all over before he takes the saddle off—there are seen wet patches, the rest of the hair being dry, you can take it that the saddle presses here unduly. Therefore, have the saddle padded, not where the wet spots are, but round them, to lift the weight off the wet spots. A saddler can pad a saddle anywhere quite quickly; he just makes a slit in the flannel lining, puts in some flocks and stitches it up again. What to do with saddles when they come in from hunting should come under horsemastership, but as we are on the subject, it will be well to dispose of it now. Saddles should be thoroughly dried before the fire or in the sun. When quite dry, the saddle should be beaten well with a stick. Those thick canes with knobs on are best; this beating raises the flock and removes any lumps. Knead the padding, as it were, with the hands and brush the flannel. Often wash

it thoroughly with soap and water, this before it has time to get shiny with the sweat from the horse. If you value your horse and want to economise in sore backs and idle days, have the saddles re-lined every season. It is worth it. Let them be very thick and lofty in the stuffing at first, it soon settles down. If by any chance the horse rolls when out hunting or in the stable when the saddle is on his back, see carefully that the tree is not broken. The tree is the wooden, iron plated frame on which the saddle is built. If this is broken the arch will flatten and the saddle gall the horse. The care of sore backs and various improvisations which allow us to hunt a horse with a tender, if not actually sore, back, will come under horsemastership. The best girth is the Fitzwilliam, made of drab webbing. The principle is a wide band, with a narrower band on the top of it, the narrow band going through loops on the wider one. If the narrow band breaks, the wide one still retains the saddle in place. If the wide one breaks, the narrow one holds the saddle firm and the loops prevent the ends flapping about. Folded leather girths are very good, because a thin well-greased piece of felt can be kept inside and the girth thus always remains soft and pliable. Have the stirrup irons as wide as you can get them, narrow ones are extremely dangerous. Have them heavy, and then, on falling, their own weight swings them clear and your foot is not caught. All the devices for release of the leather or iron made to prevent the foot being caught and held are all right in the saddler's shop, but do not work so well in practice or are apt to come off just when not wanted. A straight bar on the saddle, with the catch down, is good enough for anyone who does not anticipate disaster at every movement of the horse. A breastplate is not needed on a well shaped horse ; if he gets very tucked up late in the season it may be well to use one, not otherwise If a horse needs a crupper, his place is in a 'bus, not out hunting.

VI.

RIDING AND JUMPING.

IT seems to me, on looking over earlier letters, that you may with some justice charge me with putting things a bit out of their place. I have talked about riding to hounds and performing all sorts of valiant feats, and then here I am tamely harking back to the rudiments of the business. But I do not mind admitting that there was a little method in this upside-down process. If I had inflicted you with all this dull stuff at first, you might not have stuck to me till I had reached the more advanced stage, so I tried to fire your ardour and so coax you along with me.

It is inculcated into the cavalry recruit that the horse must be his friend and that in dealing with horses it is mutual confidence which makes mutual good-will. Intelligence is fostered by an absence of fear. A horse is highly strung, and if treated with kindness is capable of splendid effort and much intelligence, but if knocked about soon becomes a dangerous brute or sullen clod. So get on good terms with every horse you ride. Look round to see that all is right with the gear, the bridle and saddle fitting properly and the girths fairly tight—not too tight. You can hitch them up a hole later on when you have gone a mile or two. If you try to do it before you start the horse blows himself out and will not let you. You never need girth very tight if the horse is of a good shape. Before you mount take the reins and whip all in the left hand. Never mount with the whip in the right hand, because the horse, if nervous, will imagine as you swing over the saddle that you are going to hit him. Tighten the off-rein

so that the horse may not browse off your nether garments. Sometimes a snappy horse does this and it is no joke. Stand facing the horse's tail with your left shoulder against his near shoulder. If he has a mane, grasp it with your left hand; if he has not, grip his neck in front of the withers. With the right hand give the iron a turn from left to right and put in the foot. Make the horse stand still. Nothing is so annoying as a horse that moves away as soon as you put your foot in the stirrup. Hop once on the right

YOU NEVER NEED GIRTH VERY TIGHT IF THE HORSE IS OF A GOOD SHAPE.

foot, turn the body facing the saddle and seize it at the back or cantle. The left knee—and this is the important point—should be pressed against the saddle-flap to keep the toe from digging into the horse's ribs. Spring off the right foot and help yourself up by the cantle. Pause a second while standing in the stirrup and drop lightly, not "soss," into the saddle. Turn the right toe inwards and pick up the stirrup. Never bend down and grope with the hand for the iron; this is just the time a fresh horse may buck or plunge, and if you are half off, feeling for the stirrup, he shovels you off altogether. If the leather is turned the right way it lies smoothly up the inside of the shin. If you find difficulty in getting the right foot into the stirrup, twist the leather a few times from left to right before mounting and then it will hang in such a position as to meet the toe. The length of the leather always seems a great difficulty with beginners. Personally, I fancy leathers rather longer than shorter. If a man is round in the thighs and thick in the calf he will want his leathers on the short side. If his thighs are long he will sit comfortably if the leathers are long enough to allow the fork to clear the pommel of the saddle when he stands up in the stirrups with the feet thrust right home. If a horse is a bit "roached backed" and very strong behind the saddle the stirrups will have to be a bit shorter than with a horse with fine withers and a hollowish back. Flat-racing jockeys have adopted a seat like a frog on a shovel, which may suit them possibly well enough in flat races, where they go at top pace all through and hang like grim death on to their horses' mouths, but they are helpless if a horse bucks or plunges. I fancy if Fordham, Harry Custance or Fred Archer were alive they would still head the list of winning jockeys without adopting this American seat. Steeplechase jockeys ride longer, but not so long as the hunting seat. A steeplechase is an effort sustained but for a short time, and I notice cross-country jockeys ride fairly long out hunting. The great thing is to acquire a seat independent altogether of the reins. If you want to get a secure seat and strengthen the riding muscles practice riding without stirrups; trot a little without them every day and keep your balance without any assistance from the bridle. You can only do it by gripping with the thighs, not the calves, and

keeping the heels down and toes up. Riding home from hunting at a walk, kick the feet out of the stirrups and cover some distance without them. You will soon feel you are getting into the right place in the saddle.

There are some riders who stick on as if nailed to the saddle, by sheer strength of grip, and haul the horse about by force of arm. They turn a well mannered, generous horse into a sulky puller in no time. What is wanted is a

MEN ON HORSES RETAIN THE PIGSKIN IN THE MOST REMARKABLE POSITIONS.

firm, yet pliant, seat in the middle of the saddle, with heel, knee and shoulder in more or less one upright line. If you sit too far back, out go your legs like the shafts of a cart, and the pressure of the leg behind the girth cannot be applied as it should be for almost everything you want a horse to do. Men on horses retain the pigskin in the most remarkable positions. They ride all their lives in postures which are

so weird that it would seem almost impossible to get into, much less maintain. If the body is thrown too far forward, that is, on to the fork, it is obvious that the man is half way over the horse's head already and a peck or stumble shoots him up its neck or off over its shoulder. Sit with the body well poised over the hips or, if anything, slightly back, with as much of the thigh touching the saddle as possible. Screw yourself into the saddle, as it were. You can feel yourself doing it quite well, especially on the way home from hunting, when the limbs are relaxed. From the knee downward the leg covers the girth; the body free, not resisting the movements of the horse. Drawing back the leg from the knee downwards you press the horse behind the girth, but only just behind it, to urge him forward, to keep him up to his bridle or to see he does not shuffle off a fence when you present him at it. The elbows should not be "akimbo," but should hang loosely from the shoulder, free to move backward and forward so as not to have a dead, heavy feel on the horse's mouth. Try to ride with long reins, the hands almost touching the bottom button of the coat. If the horse shoves out his nose, do not scramble up the reins and dig your heels into his ribs. Drop the hands and feel the horse with the legs below the knee. If a horse jumps aside, as a fresh one will if a bird flies out of the hedge, do not clutch at the reins; move with him and sit still.

Haute Ecole riding is a much more scientific business. It is very clever, and, if anyone has grasped the principles, is an advantage in ordinary riding, but not worth the trouble of learning so far as hunting is concerned. When hacking, ride with the toe in the stirrup, keeping it there by sinking the heel and pressing on the ball of the foot. You have the elasticity of the ankle to assist in taking the bump when trotting, and also the leg, with the toe in the stirrup, is in a better position to apply the "aid" just behind the girth. For hunting push the foot home in the iron, but keep the toe up; if you let it point down, it throws the whole body off the balance. Also, by keeping the heel down you are able to "feel" the waist at the small of the back, which brings the body on the proper part of the anatomy to meet the saddle.

Do not be sure you have acquired a seat independent of the reins till you have tried jumping a few fences with the reins knotted on the horse's neck. In trotting keep the horse well up to his bridle by occasional leg pressure behind the girths. Let him trot deliberately and well within himself; do not haul yourself up to meet the bumps, or rise in the stirrups by your own effort. Let the action of the horse lift your weight. Some smooth-actioned horses hardly move us in the saddle, others provide a good deal of the cup and ball business. Do not try to start a horse from a standstill to a trot or a trot to a canter by "clucking" or chirping; it is amateurish, and these weird noises not only affect your own horse, but also all others near. A feel on the horse's mouth, a slight closing of the legs, are all that is needed. In riding at a fence you must not pull the horse at the critical moment. Fancy jumping, yourself, with a string tied to your collar, which someone chucked just as you were taking off. Keep a strongish, even hold of the reins and a firm pressure with both legs, but do not tighten the reins convulsively as the horse nears the fence or as he rises to it. There is no fault so bad as refusing. It utterly upsets the timid, and certainly damps the ardour of the bold rider. It loses one's place in a run, and instead of having fences to jump without the crowd, one finds oneself jostling in the ruck. A horse will soon know if you mean business. If you "throw your heart over first," he will not think of refusing. It is the firm clasp of the legs and the even feel of the mouth that make him go. The important thing is to make the horse jump where you put him, not swerving and jumping wherever he likes. Remember that at a jump the shorter his last few strides the better effort he can make. Gauge the ground with your eye, and try to show the horse by a quick squeeze of the legs where he should take off. If he takes off too far away from a fence, it means you lose that distance on the other side. If the horse is going collectedly, his hind legs are under him, and he will deal with any unseen difficulty.

We have had to do, up to now, with the nice, free, good-natured horse, but the time will come when you will have to ride the ill-mannered, shifty and "nappy" animal. If you are sure, and *be sure*, the horse understands what you want

him to do and will not do it because he is suffering from idleness or obstinacy and needs punishing, let him have it, but before you start be sure you mean to win. Do not work yourself into a temper. Keep cool and put it across him. Rearing is a bad fault and one is rather helpless, because the horse may lose his balance and fall back on one. Do not pull on the reins. Catch the mane or pommel of the saddle and

AT A JUMP THE SHORTER HIS LAST FEW STRIDES THE BETTER EFFORT HE CAN MAKE.

clip him a sharp one between the ears with the whip, not with the heavy handle, or you may injure the horse. If the horse paws the air he has got his balance, but if he stops doing so and his legs hang down, he has lost his balance and may come

WITH A REFUSER THE SPURS ARE THE BEST PUNISHMENT.

over. Slip your feet out of the stirrups and shift for yourself. Bucking is awkward and may be caused by a cold saddle being put on the horse's back. Do not get on this horse in the stable yard. Walk him half a mile and get on then. If he bucks and there is plenty of room, gallop him; he cannot buck and gallop at the same time. Keep a horse's head up if he bucks; he cannot give a real big buck unless he gets his head down. But a real good bucker will grass you sooner or later. As he gallops give him one or two good strokes down the shoulders. If a horse runs away, try to pull him round either way. If he can be steadied, keep him galloping, and as he has gone some distance for his own amusement, let him

do a bit for yours, preferably in a deep ploughed field. Give him one or two good " rib binders " with a cut whip. He will soon want to stop, but send him on till he wishes he had never started. A " nappy " horse is one which will not leave the stable or, if he has got away, wants to come back. This is often caused by being exercised in a field, round and round, near his stable. If he is bad and you cannot cure him, the only way is to ride him some distance with another horse alongside him and when he has got away from familiar surroundings he may go all right. With a refuser the spurs are the best punishment, because if you leave go of his head to hit him just as he approaches the fence he will swing round. But give him a couple of sharp digs, low down, just as he is about twenty feet from the fence. Do not begin a battle with a horse which is vicious unless you are prepared to see it through ; remember, if he beats you now he has beaten you for all time.

VII.

BUYING AND CONDITIONING THE MOUNT.

IN this letter you and I will sally forth together to buy a horse. Before we start, we will read together an advertisement which appeared quite recently in a well known paper. It will not be a bad guide for us. "Wanted at once, 12 thoroughbred or nearly thoroughbred horses, not under 16 hands, up to 13 stone or over, suitable for hunting. Must have long straight action, long fronts, deep shoulders, good flat limbs, short backs, straight hind legs, not over nine or under five years, and of the highest possible quality, with courage, character and action. Prices moderate. All horses must be sound." Mind you, not one such but a dozen. I much doubt whether there are twelve horses in Great Britain, at any price, which would answer this modest requirement. Do not buy horses out of proportion to your weight. If you are a light-weight—say, walking 10½ stone to 11 stone—keep clear of big, powerful horses. They cost more and are never so nice to ride as a horse which suits your weight. A big horse will tire you, and you will never feel part of the horse but more of a passenger. Sixteen hands or an inch less is big enough. Above all, let the horse be well bred. A well bred animal is more active, more comfortable, and always has a leg to spare. Action is everything, action in all paces. Action means that the system of levers comprising the bony frame, tendons and ligaments are truly proportioned. Exercise and condition will cover that frame in time with muscles which give the horse strength and fleetness, but if the action is faulty nothing will conceal it. Do not buy a young horse; he has all his troubles before him. Six years old is young enough, and if sound and fresh on his legs he is as good at eight or

nine as any other age. The first and foremost thing is that he should be sound, or at any rate hunting sound. Handsome he may not be. Possibly he is not fast, nor has he the best of manners. Perchance he is an unenterprising and sticky jumper; but if he has all these qualifications to perfection and is not sound, what good is he? He may be in the stable half his time, attended by vets. and coddled by grooms. What do his beauty, his manners, his jumping powers avail then? I wish I had the money safely back in my pocket which I have frittered away by not sticking to this rule and being led away by appearances, brilliant performances and what not. Soundness and constitution are the groundwork, anything else is but trimming. Do not forget that there may be faults in a horse which we cannot see, so it is sheer insanity to buy one with faults which anyone can see with half an eye. A very slight whistle will cheapen a horse from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent., and will not at any rate stop him from coming out hunting in his turn; but a horse which makes a noise must have blood and lots of it.

A common horse at any time should be avoided. If in addition to his want of breeding his wind is wrong, he is a nuisance, because however slow hounds run, it is an effort for him to keep up. He is at once pumped out if you press him up hill or in deep ground, soon falls, and usually lies on you. The thoroughbred, or almost thoroughbred, horse is so fast that hounds ordinarily extend him only to half pace, and with a light weight he will go as well at a moderate pace as if he were sound. But if anything is wrong with the organs of respiration, no horse will go for long at top pace. The best kind of noise, if there can be any best, is that form which clears up somewhat on exertion. Horses seldom, if ever, improve if they have anything wrong with the wind. They go from bad to worse, sometimes slowly, sometimes altogether, and often become roarers after a summer's run. A speck on the eye cheapens a horse very much, and if it is not in the line of vision it does not prevent a horse from seeing, but only a vet. can tell how much it matters or may matter. A few blemishes, such as a chipped or bunged-up knee, will not impair his usefulness, nor will a capped hock,

SOON FALLS AND USUALLY LIES ON YOU.

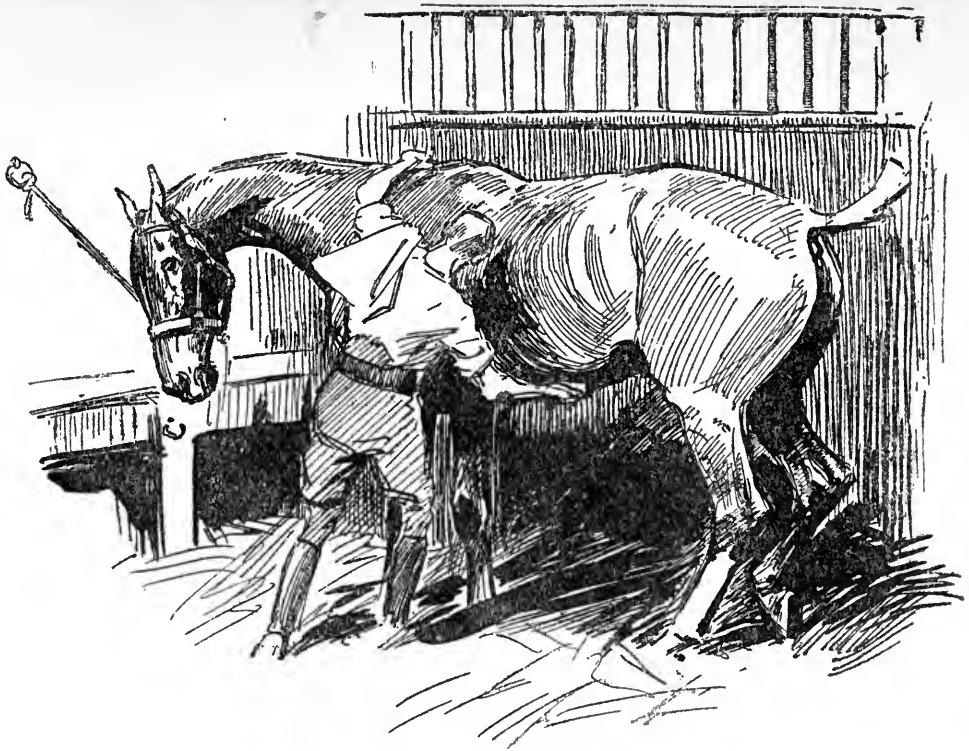
a well set splint or a few wind galls, provided the price is in proportion. None of these will prevent the horse coming out to do his bit. But be warned by one who has suffered badly at first and in a lesser degree as glimmerings of sense came. Beware of curbs, spavins, broken down tendons, foot diseases and weak constitutions. Should the horse which looks like winning the Grand National have a curb, do not look at him twice; he will land you sooner or later, usually sooner. If fired, the dealer will tell you it was done as a two-year-old to strengthen his hocks. Do not believe him. Another which should be first at Olympia has a spavin. Not as a gift would I take him. Another, well mannered, a beautiful jumper, handsome enough to carry the fortunes of an emperor, turn down without a second glance if he has any symptoms of laminitis or navicular. These are the commonest and worst faults. There are scores of others. I could go into a lengthy description of them, but get a veterinary book and study them for yourself. The next most important thing is constitution. Some horses are never sick or sorry, others are always wrong and easily upset, and after a hard day are not fit to come out again for a fortnight. If a horse will eat and rest well after a day's hunting, he will come out again soon; but one that frets, breaks out into a sweat and will not eat is always light and washy in constitution, and will not put on flesh and keep fit. I have noticed that if a horse is broad and firm at the root of the neck just in front of the withers he is often strong constitutionally. He must be good behind the saddle, strong loins and barrel-like ribs, anything but flat sided or herring gutted. If you can find perfect shoulders, well and good; but if the horse rides well and gives you a good "feel" at all paces, especially down hill and across ridge and furrow, his shoulders will be right, whether they look it or not. Avoid a horse with a tail set on low down, tucked in and mean-looking; he is usually underbred. Also keep clear of a sunken, sullen eye. He will do something wrong you may be sure. If his legs are clean and do not "fill" and get puffy after a day's hunting, you have a horse which will save you a lot of trouble. Do not buy a horse at auction unless you know all about him,

however good-looking he is or however flowery his description may be. The place to buy a horse is the hunting field, one you have seen going in front many a time, one you cannot catch, and which comes early, stays late and turns out three days a fortnight. If you want to hunt and see sport, never mind what he looks like, buy him. If you are wise, refuse all offers to part with him. I once knew a man who always had such a horse. He came out from a big town and no distance seemed too great for him. He was a manager of a carting and carrying agency, and I daresay in his travels to find draught horses he picked up these good hunters. He was a remarkable character. He seldom spoke, his only remark when he did being "Fine mornin'," irrespective of whether it was fine or raining "cats and dogs." If you were in a fever of excitement to get away with hounds and got hung up in some bolt hole in a crowd and he was near and saw you for the first time, all he said or did to show he was alive was to ejaculate "Fine mornin'." If you were riding your hardest to keep your place in a fast dart, there he was cool as a cucumber with his infernal "Fine mornin'." But though he said little he must have thought a lot, because he was one of the finest men to hounds I ever saw. Quick, resolute and with a wonderful eye to a country, he was quite unbeatable. His nerves were like iron, and though he was an ugly, awkward-looking horseman, he had beautiful hands. All horses seemed to go kindly with him, and once his leg was over his back a horse was a hunter if anything would make him one. I bought many a horse from him, and not a "dud" in the lot.

Now a word on horsemastership. It is a very big subject, and I can only touch on the fringe of it. The way to get work out of a horse is by putting work into him in the form of grooming and exercise. Condition is cumulative and is the outcome of regular exercise, good grooming and good feeding. Without condition you cannot expect to see a good run through to the end, and you will not get your horse out hunting as often as you should. To get a horse fit by November he should come up from his summering about the middle of August, not later, at any rate, than the end of that month. Condition is walked, not galloped on to a

horse. Begin very steadily with the oats, do not try to stuff him with them at first; 3lb. a day, given at 1lb. three times, is quite enough for the first week. Plenty of good sound, well got, long hay; a few sliced carrots, and a bran mash twice a week. Walk him in hand for the first week an hour or so a day. The next week increase the oats to 6lb. a day, and get on the horse's back and walk him for an hour to an hour and a half each day. Gradually increase the corn till, when the regular season begins, he is getting 14lb. or thereabouts in four feeds. You will find that you will not get this quantity of oats into the horse till the regular season starts and you are doing real hard work; even then you will perhaps not get the horse to take so much corn at any time, unless he is a very good "doer" indeed. I have got 16lb. a day often into a thoroughbred horse, and I know trainers who feed up to 18lb. I advocate long hay to be always with the horse, unless a horse is a gross feeder. Of course, if he is not eating his oats keep the hay from him. If the horse bolts his oats without masticating them put chop in his feeds. I do not like rolled or bruised oats, because the corn dealer can send any rubbish and you cannot recognise it. Keep up the walking exercise, not less than two hours a day, more if you like, right away till cubbing starts. Then he will get little trots and canters to open his pipes. Do not do any galloping or jumping in the cubbing season; the ground is hard and fences are blind. I should not allow a horse out of a walk till he goes cubbing. If the horse is big and fat about the middle of October take him a few short trots in ploughed land. Nothing puts on muscle and improves his wind like it. The so-called two hours' exercise of the groom is usually a humbug. It generally takes place before you are up, and you have no check on it. If the groom is not very busy let him do it after breakfast, so that you have some eye to how long the horse is actually out of the stable. If after the groom's exercise you fancy a ride, get up on the horse and give him an hour or so more. It will do you both good, but ride the horse all the time; that is, "nag" him and correct some of the groom's bad methods. Hold the horse together with the bridle: make

him walk out and use himself. Many grooms have the idea that water is bad for a horse; some even give him no water before he goes out hunting—the essence of cruelty. Let him have all the water he can drink at all times except after his corn or when he is hot. Horses have very small stomachs and quick digestions, therefore feed him often; four smaller feeds of oats are better than three big ones. When the horse comes in tired from hunting give him a bucket of warm gruel, made of oatmeal and linseed jelly. Nothing soothes the stomach and intestines so well after exertion and long fast. If a horse is rather done after hunting get him on the way home a little warm water with a handful or two of oatmeal or, failing that, bran or even flour in it. But, if the horse is fairly fresh, get home. He will do better in his own stable. Let him pick a nice bit of hay as soon as he has had his gruel. It stays his stomach and prepares it for oats, which give in a bran mash after the horse is groomed and put away for the night. When the horse is fit an hour and a half a day will be enough exercise if he is doing three days' hunting a fortnight. After a day's hunting a horse should be walked about in hand for twenty minutes to take the stiffness off; let him keep his sheet on. Never do ordinary exercise in clothing. Grooms always want to because it keeps the coat down, but at the covert side in a north-east wind, the groom is not there to pop the sheets on. Muscle and condition are put on a horse as much by grooming as anything else. At first, when a horse comes up from summering, he will want a curry comb just to loosen the scurf, but when he is once "bottomed" he should never have a curry comb on him again. Dandy brush, straw wisp and body brush only. It should take a groom an hour's solid strapping to do a horse properly. First all over with a handful of loose straw, next dandy brush to remove all the dirt, then the straw wisp, followed by body brush and rubber. All these must be applied with force; no patting of the horse, no smoothing of the hair, but bang, bang with all the weight of the body put into it. Grooming is a form of massage, not to make the coat look well only, but to stimulate the blood vessels and aid



AN HOUR'S SOLID STRAPPING.

circulation. Do not forget to make the groom sponge the horse's eyes, nostrils and dock after he has finished him all round. Keep the feet clean; always pick them out twice a day and wash them when the horse has been cleaned. Never wash the legs under any circumstances. Our time together is drawing to an end; one more letter, in which I hope to touch on shoeing and summering of horses, with a word to the one-horse man and on hunting on the cheap, and then we part.

VIII.

SUMMERING AND THE "ONE-HORSE" MAN.

THE question of the best way of dealing with horses in summer is a vexed one. If you have any use for a horse, to ride on parade or hack, keep him up and fit and he will do well, provided his legs are clean and not worn with the season's hunting. But, as a rule, a horse is better for a summer's rest. Some people drive hunters in the summer, but I always fancy—it may be only fancy—that a horse driven in harness never seems to ride well afterwards; somehow, between shafts seems the wrong place for a good hunter. Very few people want to ride in the summer; the ground is hard and motors and tar macadam make hacking not what it used to be. The usual course is to turn the horse out to grass because it is the easiest and cheapest way of disposing of him. If he does go out to grass, the end of April or a week later is quite soon enough. As soon as the horse finishes hunting leave off all grooming and gradually reduce the corn. I must say that after the hunting season I am a believer in blistering a horse's legs before he is turned out to grass or otherwise disposed of. The blister is applied from below the knee to the hoof. It is painful at first, but not for long. In the case of horses following a hard season it will be found that the legs begin to fill and generally the leg is not so fine and hard as it should be, the tendons and ligaments are not clear and defined to the touch, and something is needed to rouse to new and healthier action parts which have become deficient in vital energy. So a counter-irritation is set up artificially by means of a blister. This, of course, must be applied skilfully, the hair being first clipped off and the horse tied up short by the head,

or he will get at the legs with his teeth. The blister also seems to act as a kind of permanent bandage, tightening the skin, applying pressure to tendons and ligaments, and fining down the leg. The only objection is the pain to which the horse is subjected. But I do not fancy. that the horse feels pain very acutely in the extremities There are many disadvantages in turning horses out to grass. If the horse is a cheap one and you do not care much about him, out with him; but if he has carried you well and finishes up the season sound but a bit worn, I think it false economy to turn him out. It is like owning a shoot, spending money on raising game, paying keepers and then trying to economise by buying cheap cartridges. At grass flies are the deuce, they make horses stamp and gallop about and damage themselves on the hard ground. Also one can seldom turn a horse out in a field all to himself. If with others, they are sure to gallop and often kick one another. I have few recollections of a horse coming up from grass as fresh on his legs as I had hoped. My experience is that the best and safest way to dispose of a horse in summer is to turn him into a big box or hovel, with plenty of air and light and deep in old straw, bracken or anything which makes a soft covering to the ground. The horse never need come out, and if he gets a small feed of oats every day he keeps his muscle wonderfully well and comes up in autumn fat and big, and you have something to work on. He should always have water with him. Give him as much cut grass or clover as you like, together with hay, and a feed of oats a day, from July 1st onwards. If there is adjoining the box a bit of an enclosed run, say 20ft. square, with plenty of soft covering to the ground, so much the better, but it is not essential; horses do well in a big box and nothing else. It seems an unnatural sort of process, but I never knew a horse do badly in these circumstances. He requires very little attention, needs no grooming, and when he comes up he will take half the time to get fit that a horse needs which has been out to grass, and he will come up sound and clean limbed. His feet will have grown and the frogs developed, whereas in a sun-baked field his feet will be broken and not fit to take a shoe for some time.

AT GRASS, FLIES ARE THE DEUCE.

Now as to shoeing; you will agree how important it is when you think that a horse weighing half a ton is supported on a piece of iron three-quarters of an inch thick. Also, imagine the concussion and hammering which take place in trotting half a dozen miles on a road as hard as granite. The foot is formed by a kindly Nature in the most scientific manner. The hard walls of the hoof are without feeling, and are used to nail the shoe on to the foot. The shoe answers no purpose other than to prevent the hoof being worn away by contact with hard surfaces. The frog is that wedge-shaped piece of indiarubber-like substance let into the foot, the function of which is to take the concussion, therefore the frog should touch the ground as much as possible; owing also to its shape it prevents slipping. The frog should be developed as much as possible. You sometimes see it shrunk to the size of your little finger, and quite useless for the purpose for which it was designed. The frog does not need cutting; portions which would otherwise fall off may have to be removed, but no more. If the frog is not coming to the ground, lower the feet by rasping the walls. The principle of shoeing should be to let the frog bear on the ground as much as possible. The shoe should be made to fit the foot, not the foot the shoe. Many farriers rasp the hoof in front till the horse seems to be club-footed and stands much too upright on his feet. The soles—those portions between the frog and wall—should not be pared. If the toe requires it, shortening should be done by rasping the ground surface and not by dumping the toe. A hunting shoe should weigh less than a pound and be made of concave iron, fullered; that is, with a groove cut for the nail heads. Every three weeks or so the shoes should be removed and, unless worn out, the same shoe put back again after the walls where the weight comes have been rasped level. The soles are sensitive and liable to injury from stones, etc., if they are pared by the farrier to look nice and neat. The removal of shoes is to ensure an even distribution of weight. I do not suggest that the toes should be allowed to get so long that they become thin and shelly, but they should not be rasped till the foot is unduly shortened. If you cast a shoe out

hunting, get off and see if any nails are left on the inside of the hoof, for they will play havoc with the opposite fetlock. If a front shoe is cast, get a temporary one tacked on to get you home, but a hind shoe does not matter much. Have your horse shod at a hunting forge, not an ordinary one. Send him any distance to a hunting blacksmith rather than have him shod at a carriage or cart-horse smithy. The horse has got to be exercised, so he may as well go a long way to be shod. If a horse goes lame suddenly on the road, get down, and you will often find he has got a stone wedged in between the frog and the shoe and the stone is pressing on the sole; hammer it out with your whip handle. Corns are common, but are not dangerous. Remove the shoe, pare out the corn seat and dress with butter of antimony; and when the shoe is put back see that the smith springs off the point of the shoe when hot and thus relieves the pressure on the corn.

Now a word or two on the question of hunting on the cheap, and how the one-horse man may get as much hunting as his one horse will permit. It is a somewhat depressing task. I might as well set out to tell you where to get a good suit of clothes for four guineas or a pair of boots for 30s. If you have but one horse the main thing is not to give him long days. It is the long absence from the stable that tries the horse more than anything else. I believe, if you took your horse to a meet, say four miles off, met at 11 o'clock, and had a good hunt of forty minutes soon after hounds threw off, and at once came home and were in your stable again by 1.30, that a light weight could hunt a sound horse three days a week. But how often do hounds find shortly after they throw off? They sometimes draw miles of country and do not find till 2 o'clock. Perhaps not then. Often a horse leaves his stable at 9 in the morning, covers twelve miles to the meet, and drags about till 1 o'clock. Then hounds find and you may be galloping, off and on, for a couple of hours, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, and jump any amount of fences. You, perhaps, stay on to the end of the day and at dusk turn for home, possibly fifteen miles off, and are not back till 6.30; this is a day from which a horse takes long to recover, unless he is very fit indeed and has a wonderful constitution.

If you have but one horse, make up your mind to go short days and pick near meets. If you have two or more horses, I always found that, if I could work it, the most economical thing was to start off on one horse and then, about 12 o'clock, let the man leave the stable on another; and if the meet was handy and he was a sharp fellow and knew the country, he would pick me up about 1.30. I then got off the first horse, even if we had done nothing, and let the man take him home. If the man missed me it did not matter much, as it was only a good exercise for the horse which came on late. A one-horse man must have that one sound and of good constitution; a horse which needs coddling up to get out again within a week is useless to him. If you are a good horseman and a good judge of horses in the rough in farmers' hands, you can buy a good green horse at four years old, make him into a good hunter and, perhaps, sell him for a handsome profit; but there are many disappointments; horses go wrong in the wind, get lame and turn out badly, and the profit made on one soon disappears if you have bad luck in succession with a horse or two. Riding horses which you hope to sell to make ends meet is a poor job; if you do not let him slip along no one will know whether he is any good or not, and if you do you are in an agony of apprehension as to whether he will injure himself. If you have time to spare, you can look after your own horse and probably keep him very fit because you will be interested in him. But if you come in from hunting after a long day you must be a keen sportsman and ardent if you are willing to off with your coat and thoroughly clean the horse and what grooms vulgarly call the "mucky tack." Possibly the cheapest way to hunt with one horse is to keep him with some one whom you could rely on to do him well. If you do not live in the middle of the country you could have him somewhere central and cycle over to where he is stabled. There are certain expenses you cannot avoid; the subscription to the hounds, for instance. The time was when subscriptions were small and interchangeable, whereby, if you lived on the borders of two hunts, you could hunt with either pack by paying a subscription to one. Hunts have now got so expensive to maintain that this convenient custom has almost gone, and now you must, in most cases, subscribe to

HE WOULD PICK ME UP WITH A SECOND HORSE.

both or any pack you hunt with. Therefore, if you can choose your centre, let it be in the middle of a country from which you have a choice of days all fairly handy. Near the kennels is almost always the best place because the kennels are usually central. You cannot economise in fodder. Nothing but the best is any good; inferior quality leads to mischief at once. Of course, you can hire horses, but this is expensive and not always satisfactory. Before the war two guineas a day used to hire a decent horse in most provincial countries, but now I hear that three guineas, sometimes four, is asked. A blank day would seem very blank if we had to fork out four guineas for it. Also, hirelings, being ridden by all and sundry, are not ideal mounts, and half the pleasure of hunting is in the ownership of the horse. Still, hiring is an easy way to hunt; you pay your money, go as fast as you like, stay as long as you like and jump as much as you like—or the horse will. And then you bang along home—they are not your forelegs—hand the horse over to the owner and have no risk or anxiety. I wish I could say more to the one-horse man, and he not endowed with a superabundance of this world's gear; but it is rather a hopeless task, especially now, of all times. If I had been writing to you twenty years ago I could have got quite enthusiastic about it; there were ways and means then. Packs there were which asked no subscriptions; some rich Masters preferred to hunt their countries without financial assistance from anyone. A horse could be bought for a light weight for half what it costs now. Oats were 24s., instead of 75s.; Hay £4, instead of £14; grooms came to one for wages that they would be insulted with to-day. Alas! those days have gone—I fear never to return.

With these somewhat depressing thoughts our time has come to part. If you have struggled with me thus far, I most sincerely thank you, and would ask you to struggle through a few more sentences, and then I have done. These are letters to young sportsmen, rich or poor, with ten horses or one. The name of sportsman can always be acquired and maintained. I somehow fancy that you will gain more "kudos" by being a good sportsman than you would by being a Senior Wrangler. I never remember anyone saying to me:

"Look! you see that man over there, he speaks German like a native," or, "This one, he knows more about the duck-billed platypus than any man in Europe." But I have often heard it said: "See! there is so and so, a clinking man to hounds and a fine shot." Learning, of course, is splendid in its way and commands our admiration and respect; but, if you value the affection of your friends, be known as a good sportsman. You may be round-shouldered with brains and your pockets bulgy with "Bradburys," and no one will care any more for you—the man—on account of either; but the reputation of being a good sportsman will carry you far and sure.

A POSTSCRIPT ON HOUND WORK.

THERE have been many books on hunting, the horse, hound breeding and care of kennels, but there is a rather marked silence on the subject of actually hunting hounds, and I must plead the following letter, the writer of which is unknown to me, as my excuse for dashing in where angels innumerable have feared to tread:

> It seems to me the tendency on the part of the younger generation is to think far too much of the horse and his doings and too little of the hound and his important work. Hunting people talk about good gallops, formidable fences, and so on, but all too seldom say anything about the fascinating work of the pack. In my opinion they would get much additional pleasure if they knew more of hound work and were better able to follow what is being done by the huntsman and whips. I wish you could see your way clear to writing something on this side of hunting.

Successful huntsmen do what they find answers best largely from instinct, from an intuitive and sometimes almost uncanny knowledge of the ways of the most astute of wild animals. Often, though not invariably, the best huntsmen are professionals, and are not so willing to give away their secrets as to sit down and write a handbook on how the business is done. All I can presume to do, never having hunted a pack of hounds, nor in my vainest moments even imagined that I could do so, will be to set down what I have seen good huntsmen do.

A huntsman lives in a lantern and has to bear the full gaze of a public not always appreciating the enormous difficulties which face him on many occasions; but, after all, professionals of every class are more or less fair game for criticism, for it is their fate to be watched. Can a huntsman,

taking on a new pack, be fortunate enough to chance on a few weeks of good scent, his fortune is made, if he has skill to fall back on when scenting conditions are against him.

I admit I am not one of those excellent sportsmen who hunt only for hunting's sake. I like the ride, and, if I am lucky enough to be close to hounds, enjoy pace and straightness in a run. Pure hound work and the use of the horse as a vehicle to keep me in a position from which I can watch hounds is not my idea of the game. If it were, I should hunt on foot with a pack of beagles. Of all abominations commend me to following foxhounds on foot; it is like running after your hat when blown off in a gale of wind; you hare after it, and just as it is within reach off it goes again. Just so in foot hunting; in the slowest hunt you arrive breathless at the first check, only to see hounds away again the next minute. There are good sportsmen who do it, but they are made of that stern stuff which will allow a man to flog for hours a stream which in the memory of living man never held a trout.

A good huntsman seems to instil into his hounds affection and confidence. He feeds them himself, and makes much of them on all occasions. He does not go into the kennel at feeding time with a whip, but, wearing his kennel coat, lets his hounds jump up on him. I have seen a pack at the meet follow his horse and look up to him and watch his every movement. Never have I seen a good huntsman take a hound by the stern and beat him for riot or any other fault; they rate but never hide hounds. If chastisement has to be given, he leaves that to his whips. Hounds come to the huntsman for protection and comfort. If huntsmen beat hounds they say to themselves: "Where am I to go?" If a huntsman wants hounds he goes and fetches them, he does not have them rated or driven to him by his whips. And he never "holloas" them from a distance, but when he sees that they have done trying for themselves and want his assistance, he goes straight to their heads and without noise, or, getting their noses up, casts them in a body. When a huntsman seems to be trying to catch the fox himself, his hounds are usually inclined to let him try, and stand looking on doing nothing. What seems to be the essential of a good

IF CHASTISEMENT HAS TO BE GIVEN, HE LEAVES THAT TO HIS WHIPS.

pack is quick hunting, and of a good huntsman quiet handling. On a good scenting day hounds will hunt themselves, but on a bad scent the skill and patience of the huntsman are at once apparent. There is always the field to consider; after a quick dart the young bloods, and sometimes the old ones, are a bit excited and are apt to press hounds. If the pack are on the line, the field always seems willing to give them law, but when off the line and the huntsman casting the field will not stand still. I knew one canny old huntsman who, when hounds checked, if he thought it was but

momentary and they would forge ahead in the next second or two, used to ride back towards the field as if he meant to try back. This kept the field off, but unless scent was good it delayed matters, because he got his hounds' heads up and they did not try forward.

Forward and down-wind is the cast nine times out of ten. Foxes hate going up-wind, principally, I think, because

FORWARD AND DOWN-WIND IS THE CAST NINE TIMES OUT OF TEN.

of the resistance, just as a man on a bicycle rides down-wind in preference to up. Casting back is usually unsound, because if a fox has gone back the huntsman will get information of it, as the fox is likely to be viewed by the oncoming field. When a check occurs an observant huntsman usually is able to see the cause of the fox's diversion from the straight line. Something has headed him—a cart, a man, perhaps a motor car. The huntsman then looks for signs of the direction the fox has taken, always first looking down-wind. Sheep have got together and are gazing in the direction in which the fox has gone; distant crows are diving down towards something; bullocks gallop after a fox very often, and if they are up in a corner of a field it is not unlikely that the fox has quitted there. If jays and blackbirds are busy in a small covert, the fox is in it or has gone through. Huntsmen make good all ground in a semicircle in front before thinking of casting in any other direction. Casting is done quickly or slowly in accordance with the quality of the scent; if there is a burning scent the huntsman casts at a hand-gallop with all the hounds in front of him, while with indifferent scent he would cast at a walk, because if scent is poor the pack will take more time puzzling it out. What is wanted is casting with the hounds' noses down. On a good scent quick casting, without anything in the way of hurried excitement, is what should be aimed at. Good huntsmen when on a faint line ride in rear of the pack and encourage those behind to work up to the leaders; they do not ride ahead and holloa for the rest to come up. When hounds check they should be allowed to spread out in all directions, and at first the huntsman sits still. Some bad huntsmen begin business almost before hounds check at all, just because they are slowing up, and begin "yo-yoting" before they are actually off the line; what happens is that the pack lift their heads and look in the direction in which the huntsman's horse's head is pointing.

The amount of use a huntsman makes of "holloas" depends upon the reliance he can place in those "holloas." A whip's "holloa" he never neglects, or a hat held up belonging to someone who really knows the job. I have seen a huntsman gallop up to a countryman as if he would swallow him, and scream out, "Where's he gone?" as if the man had

some sinister design to lead him astray. If a man is ridden at like this he loses his head and forgets where he actually saw the fox. I knew a huntsman in Ireland, one of the best, who always rode up to a holloaing countryman with the same words, "What way are ye, Mike?" which in English is, "How do you do?" He waited a second or two and then said: "And now did you by any chance see the fox?" This method of conversation had a calming effect on the excited Hibernian, who had shouted himself black in the face, and he collected himself and said just where he saw the fox last.

If a huntsman is always trying to lift hounds or cast them before they have done making their own effort, they soon learn to stand and wait for assistance at every difficulty. If hounds are lifted and galloped three or four fields it is difficult to get their heads down again. It is better on bad scenting days to leave it a good deal to hounds than to try and force things. If on a good scenting day it is obvious at a check where the fox has gone and what has turned him, then a quick, decisive cast may set them going before anyone realises that a check has occurred. High-class hounds will keep on trying if left alone, if they occasionally hit off the line, even if they only run it over half a field. Good hounds cast themselves better than the huntsman can cast them.

Now, if hounds have been at a fox for an hour or so, and he is running short or may get to ground, it is permissible for a whip to go ahead, and if he can see the fox, stick to him. If hounds have hunted their fox for an hour, they deserve him, and he should be killed if possible. If a fox, hunted for an hour to an hour and a half at fair pace, gets to ground, he will most likely die; he gets stiff and cannot get out, so it is quite legitimate to dig for him. A fox seldom can go with breast high scent for more than twenty to twenty-five minutes, and if he gets to ground after, say, thirty-five minutes at racing pace, it would be quite reasonable to dig him out. No good huntsman would blow to ground to pretend his fox had got in unless hounds actually "mark." Hounds can be taught to bay when "gone to ground" is blown, but it is usually a bad huntsman, wanting to get home to tea, who will encourage this. Hounds must

kill foxes—there is no gainsaying this. They must be blooded as much as the country will stand, especially in the cubbing season ; hounds will not work unless they kill foxes. I must say I cannot resist a feeling of satisfaction when, after a fast dart, the fox gets away. When gone to earth I do not feel the same, because one must realise that foxes do not usually live if they have been hard hunted. But if a fox has gone twenty-five minutes of the best, one likes to think he still lives, because a fox which has beaten hounds once is full of confidence the next time, knows some country and means to use it. Hounds well blooded during cubbing are made for the season—I mean young hounds. I do not fancy a hound prefers an evil-smelling, hairy morsel covered with mud, to a good beef bone, but he eats it because it is a trophy of his prowess, and it is in his blood to hunt and kill foxes, and he must have blood to foster this spirit.

When a pack of hounds are out of luck and do not show much sport, they are, you may be sure, short of blood. These are sanguinary thoughts for otherwise humane and decent persons, but we must remember that though fox-hunting may be cruel in the last few minutes before the death, the fox has many compensations and advantages. Without hunting he would, except in mountain districts, be an extinct animal in a few years ; some are killed that the remainder be allowed to exist ; he is bred and reared in the lap of luxury, watched over with the greatest care, and once or twice in a season has a narrow shave for his life. Sometimes, on bad scenting days, I fancy he enjoys outwitting his pursuers. When death does come it is short and sharp.

There is much to admire about the fox, he always seems so methodical, cool and collected ; the field may gallop wildly here and there, the huntsman may curse, the whips rate, the foot-people holloa, and the only one of the party to keep perfectly calm is the fox—he seems to know exactly what to do. See him steal away from covert, even with hounds close at him : how smooth and even his long, low stride ; no flurry and excitement. All he wants to do is to reach the first fence, which is as good to him as a couple of fields' length. See him when almost caught in covert, hounds everywhere, how, calm still, he seems like an eel, dives under one, jumps

another, jinks this way and that and most probably gets away. I have seen more than one fox pushed down from a tree into the open jaws of twenty couples of hounds and still get away. If you see a fox coming towards you in covert with hounds behind him, how he now and then stops with uplifted pad while he calmly thinks out his next move. How active he is: a fortnight ago I saw a fox scale a park wall 15ft. high and quite smooth, just as easily as if steps had been provided for him. Even when his end comes and hounds dash at him, fairly cornered, a quick glance to see if escape is yet possible and, if not, straight he flies at the nearest hound. What a sportsman!

ON ANGLING

BY

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON.

ON ANGLING—I.

LEARNING TO CAST ON THE LAWN.

"JOB! Job's patience never was properly tried. He wasn't a fisherman." Thus in bitterness of heart exclaimed, on a day of peculiar irritation, one of the most ardent anglers that ever fished the Hampshire chalk streams. Perhaps Job was not. The evidence is negative, though the glorious book to which he gives his name expressly discourages us from angling for "Leviathan." It is, however, about smaller people of the water than this Leviathan that I mean to write to you. The hope of the most ambitious of "commencing anglers" should be bounded by fifty pounds weight of live salmon at his line's end, and even this is a large measure that few of us ever reach. The present is a day of smaller things again. I am assuming that you will "commence trout-fisher" before angling for the salmon. You cannot do much with either until you have mastery of the first rudiments of casting a fly, but when you have learnt the more or less effective casting of the trout fly you will almost, "in your stride," take the next step which leads to casting of the salmon fly; so far the more difficult and finer art of the two is the former.

I take for granted that you will begin and, further, as trout-fisher, will continue until the end of your life's chapter with a single-handed rod. The big two-handed trout rods with which our gallant forefathers used to belabour the stream are as obsolete as the arquebus, and perhaps belong to a day when fish were not educated to their present high level of wisdom and suspicion. Besides, they were most fatiguing engines almost impossible to wield in that *couchant* attitude by which only you can, with any success, make your

approaches to our latter-day trout. Further than this I shall not for the moment advise you in the matter of a rod, because the advice would be sheer waste of words. You may become proficient in the casting of a fly for a very long while before you will be expert enough to make wise choice of a rod. Indeed, many a man has gone through a life-long and not unsuccessful fishing career without ever attaining expertness in this choice. It is rather a different art from that of casting, and even the most expert is apt to be deceived by the "feel" of the rod in the shop. It is so entirely "another story" when we have it beside the river in real work.

Do not, therefore, in the first instance bother about the purchase of a rod at all. We need not assume you friendless. Of what value is a friend except to borrow of him? Borrow of him a rod, telling him frankly your innocence of all knowledge of what some write of as "the gentle craft"; and yet more particularly borrow of him a line. I say this "yet more particularly" because I propose to give you your first casting lessons on the lawn, and—note this and put it in a convenient mental pigeon-hole for ready reference, for I often see old anglers, who should know better, neglecting it—no treatment is more harmful to a fine line, more apt to fray off that waterproofing varnish which is its protection from decay, than dragging it over the lawn grass. And a fine supple line is too valuable and rare a possession to be lightly put in peril, as you will learn in all due course. But when I write of a "fine line" I write in reference to its quality, not as to its tenuity, for one of the points in which our modern wisdom is certainly superior to that of our fathers is in the weight that we give our lines. They had a theory that the thinnest line would place the fly most lightly on the water, therefore they practised this cult of thinness to such extreme that you might find them with a rod of the two-handed dimension and a line therewith of a tenuity which by no muscle and almost by no miracle could be cast out in the face of anything like an adverse current of wind. The lines most helpful to casting are those sold as "tapering," which fine down to a tenuity scarcely thicker than the gut itself towards their junction, but which swell to a comparatively large weight and substance within a few yards. The virtue of this

weight is not only that this part, euphoniously known as "the belly" of the line, itself will go out, if moderately well cast, against a breeze, but that its weight is the efficient cause of further urging out, beyond itself, the thinner section of the line and the gut cast beyond that.

Take now your borrowed rod and line—at first there is no need of the gut—and go on the lawn with them. At the very first you should, I think, borrow your friend also; for without some such help it is a little difficult to see how you are to induce the line to go out and away so as to put you into "first position," so to say, for a cast. Then, when your friend has pulled you out, say, twelve yards of line, and they lie before you on the grass, you are at what we may call the "Ready."

The first part of the cast, which you are now to commence, will be in the nature of a lift, to raise a portion of the line. Do this, if you please, with elbow down and tolerably close in against the side, and do it with a stiff wrist. Remember, particularly, throughout the cast the stiff wrist. I write "particularly" because this useful tenseness of wrist is so often forgotten. All the work is to be from the elbow joint. The grip of the hand on the rod butt, which you will grasp a little above the reel, should be firm. As for the exact mode of disposing each finger in this grip, the practice of fine anglers differs. Perhaps the master craftsman of them all, the late G. S. Marryat, used to fish with the forefinger straight along the rod. It is an impossible mode for most men, and the usual way is with the thumb, not the forefinger, straight up along the rod and with the knuckles downward.

The first movement up of the rod has been in the nature of a lift to take some of the line and the heaviest portion of it off the lawn, which, for the moment, does duty for the water. The next part of the movement is in the nature of a true cast or throw—a throw of the rod backwards over your right shoulder. You, of course, are a right-handed man. For a left-hander all this advice would be given conversely. You wish to throw the line backwards and upwards, but bear in mind all the while what the agency is exactly which is so to cast it. You, with your muscle, are not touching the line. It is the rod, the flexible spring

of the rod, which is to flick the line back. Remember that. So it is your business to work the rod in such a manner as to give this flick most effectively. That is your problem. How are you to do it? One fine caster and high authority suggests that you should imagine yourself to have on the

CAST OVER LEFT SHOULDER.

rod point a pellet of moist clay and that your purpose is to flick this pellet off as far as possible.

The idea is good: it conveys the right suggestion. The pace of the flick that will accomplish this best must depend on the flexibility of the rod, but this flexibility in its various degree you will soon grow to recognise as your hand becomes familiar with different rods. For the moment you have this rod of your friend's in hand. You give, after the lift, and without pause—rather as a quick acceleration of the lifting movement—the flick back and up, as suggested, and then you must arrest the movement. You must arrest it sharply. Remember the tenseness of the forearm muscles all the while; you must not relax this tenseness nor allow the wrist to bend nor the hand to lean back over the shoulder. Any weakening of that kind would be fatal to the cast. It has been suggested—all these suggestions are most useful as mediums between the adviser and the advisee to enable the advice to be understood, and also to the fisher in the actual practice of his craft by way of reminder of points in which he is apt to fall away from perfection—the suggestion, I say, has been made that the check in the movement of the arm should be just such as a smart groom makes when he brings the fingers up to touch the cap. Again, it is a good and helpful simile.

So there you are, you now have the line in the air above and behind you. I hope you will have brought your forearm straightly and vertically up, with no weak wavering, for this is rather essential if the line is ultimately to be projected straight in front of you again. The line is away up and behind you. How long are you to let it be so in the heavens? When is the forward movement to begin? This is, perhaps, the most important question in the whole business. Its answer is the solution of, perhaps, the most difficult problem involved. I am sorry that it is an answer which I find it also most difficult to put into words understandable by anyone to whom the "feel" of the rod is a new sensation. It is most difficult; but I must make the attempt.

In the first place, I would ask you to dismiss from your mind all that you may have heard said by them of old time about the necessity, the desirability, or even the mere

possibility of allowing the line to go straight out behind you before beginning to urge it forward again. That pleasant illusion about the throw has been dispelled, we may hope, for all time, by the diligence and the instantaneous photographs of the late Mr. Halford. The line does not go out anything like straight behind the angler's back ; it begins to be returned for the forward cast long before it gets to that position. I presume that if the angler did wait for it so to straighten itself behind, a portion of it would inevitably " go to grass," and therewith all hope of success for that particular throw would fall to the ground also.

Nevertheless, it is probably true that the besetting sin of most anglers is to begin the forward movement too soon, not to give long enough pause at the top—to be in too great a hurry.

Remember this: you have made a cast back ; you have to make a cast forward. In order to make this forward cast you have to begin it at the moment when the line has gone so far back as to give the greatest possible value to the spring of the rod, which, as we have seen, is to be the efficient cause of all its movement. That precise moment you will begin, after a little practice, to recognise for yourself. It is the moment when the forward movement which you are now to give to the rod communicates to your hand the sense that there is something of weight up there in the air behind and above you which you have to flick forward—like a moist clay pellet. The effectiveness of the forward flick depends a great deal on the choice of the right instant for its beginning. If too soon, the line has not gone far enough back and there is a bit of slack before the spring of the rod takes hold of it. If too late, there is exactly the same waste of slack line. But if the movement be precisely timed, then the spring of the rod begins active work on the line the moment it is set going forward. All the line is " live," none is dead or slack.

Now, if you have accomplished this with any success, and it is a success you are not at all likely to achieve until after very, very many failures, you have then passed the most difficult corner ; the crux of the business lies behind you. Think of the flick as having for its object the projection of the moist clay pellet from the rod's top. Think of this

THE OVERHEAD RIGHT-HAND CAST.

and then you will almost automatically find yourself checking the forward movement at the right point. That right point will be just before your forearm, still kept tense and working on the elbow joint, comes to the horizontal. Check it there and the line will then go out ; but after the check lower your hand a little further still, otherwise the outgoing of the line itself will suffer check. And this you do not want. You want the line to go out smoothly, straightly and evenly, and to alight lightly on the lawn. This the further slight drop of the arm after the check will permit it to do. The cast is made.

I have hinted that you will be little short of an infant prodigy in the angling way if you achieve this measure of success even once after very, very many bungles. I have not said this for your discouragement, but exactly with the opposite object in order that you may not be disappointed. At first you are likely to feel your case to be hopeless and to be inclined to think that you never will succeed. Then, all at once, by some happy chance of accurate timing, the line goes out comparatively well. It is a blessed moment ; it seems as if it were a gift of some fairy godmother suddenly vouchsafed. And the first time that this happens pause a moment and examine this gift. Ask yourself, "What was it that I did this time differently from the time before so as to produce this miraculously beautiful result ?" Ask yourself that, and if you can answer the question satisfactorily you will have gained a distinct step—you will at least know what to try for. Accurate timing is of the very essence of the business, and this is an accuracy that you have to appreciate through your fingers by sensation ; but you can help yourself towards the blessed end by mental attention also. It needs, in fact, all your faculties. In the immortal words of the Scottish gillie to the Professor of the "humaner letters," "it's verra easy teaching they boys Greek and Latin, but it tak's a mon wie a heid tae thraw a flee."

II.

A CASTING LESSON BY THE RIVERSIDE.

AT the end of my former letter I presumed that I had brought you, as "a commencing angler," to that state of imperfection in which you were just able to cast straight before you some twelve yards of line with no gut attachment. You are worthy of one step in promotion now, to a stage just a little nearer the real thing; we will fasten you a cast of gut—six feet or so will be enough for practice work—to the end of the reel line. And here again, since the drawing of the gut over the grass does it no good, and gut is an expensive article, do not buy it new for yourself, but borrow or burgle from a friend some of his already used and water-worn casts. Every angler lays by gut which soon becomes useless for the noble use of catching fish; but for lawn practice it will serve. Choose a fairly fine tapering cast of something like the tenuity which you will use when you come to the river, and attach a hook to it. The hook may occur to you as a superfluity, seeing that you are unlikely to catch any fish on the lawn. Yet the weight of the hook, small though it be, makes a great difference in the ease with which you may send the cast out straight. A very little experience will convince you of this truth. It is just as well, however, to snip or break off the point and barb before beginning practice. The pointless hook can be easily drawn back without catching in every blade of grass. Moreover, it is more likely than not that you will now and then make a bungling throw which will bring the "business end" of the cast in contact with your own head, and should you happen to impale your ear you will find it quite as amusing to do so with a blunt hook as with one which is fully armed with point and barb.

Now, the difference between the correct throw for sending out the line, as it should go, with the gut cast at the end of it and for propelling it without this necessary tail-piece is a difference so subtle that I despair of conveying it to you in any written form. It is all a matter of "feel," of timing, of experience—experience which can only be acquired after many failures, experience which is never so perfectly acquired that a man can say to himself: "I am certain of being able to make an absolutely faultless cast." No man acquires this certainty, and therein consists part, and large part, of the charm of the sport, and of that "glorious uncertainty" about which the angler makes his boast. The straight outgoing of the line with gut cast attached is slightly more difficult to achieve with, than it was without, this attachment. The timing has to be rather more delicate and nice; probably the pause at the top has to be a little lengthened. It is hard to say more than this; and, saying this, I have said little. I can but indicate to you; can but give you hints. I must ask you to bring your brains to the useful development of these hints. Remember the gillie's words to the Scottish professor which I quoted in my last: "It's verra easy teaching Greek and Latin; it tak's a heid to thraw a flee." You must use your head in order to help me to help you.

I have written of the straight-out throwing of the fly because in this consists really the initial difficulty. Overcome this and you have solved the hardest crux of the problem; but you have not thereby solved the whole of it. I am proposing now that we shall quit the lawn and shall betake ourselves to the nearest piece of water. It makes no matter, for our purpose, whether it be a stream in course or a placid pond. The former is the better, because it will aid you in carrying out the line and making easier its recovery for a fresh throw. But the latter will serve. It will serve you in one particular for which the lawn was not adequate. On the lawn you could see whether your line went out straightly. Here, for the first time, you are able to see whether it is alighting delicately.

A certain misapprehension has arisen in the mind of many a learner out of a misconstruing of this familiar piece of instruction anent the delicate alighting of the line. I have

taken a neophyte to the river bank to watch and to be impressed by the practice of a past-master of the gentle art of throwing the fly, and he has been impressed indeed. But the point which has seemed to impress him more than any other is the splash with which part of that master-craftsman's line has gone into the water. "Why!" I have known such an one exclaim: "He makes the deuce and all of a splash!" So he does—the deuce and all. But what the neophyte

DOWN-STREAM CASTING IN A RUSHING STREAM OR BURN.

had not the knowledge or the wit to appreciate was the place on the water of that deuce of a splash. Part of the line, as I say, went in with a splash. But if the ingenuous youth had applied his attention a little more acutely to what he saw, he would have perceived that the part of the line which created this splashing was not very far from the rod itself. He would have seen that the splash mark on the water did not extend for very many yards; he would have noted that the further end of the reel line went out beyond all that section which had made the splash and alighted on the water with very little indent in its placid surface; finally, that the gut cast, going out furthest of all, pitched slowly and lightly like that piece of thistle-down which we all have heard about so often, and that at the end of all the tiny fly came to settle on the stream's face with all the delicacy of its live original. I am writing, you will observe, of the fine casting of the dry fly, which is the last word in angling subtlety.

That is the last word; and you are but now arrived at the very first word. Therefore, I do not propose, for the moment, to take you to a chalk stream where the sophisticated trout disdain (so the purists will assure us) to look at any fly other than one cocked and dancing on the surface. Let us go first to some more rapid water where the wavelets and the ripple may help to disguise from the eye of the fish anything at all unnatural in the imitation of the live insect which you are proposing to show him. You are really quite adequately equipped now for catching a trout in a stream of this bustling character. Without committing ourselves to any dogmatic opinion on the vexed question of the up or down stream method—a question almost as heart-searching in the kingdom of fishers as that of the Big and Little Endians in the Realm of Laputa—we may confidently say that the down-stream way is the better one for the caster of little skill. The kindly action of the current will then aid in straightening for him such portion of his cast as he may have laid crookedly. Casting up-stream he will receive no such help. The twelve yards of reel line which I am imagining you able to throw out with tolerable deftness, *plus* the added length of the cast, should be quite enough to enable you to reach many a good fish. Moreover, the promptings of your proper and natural

ambition will surely have incited you to make trial of a longer line than this, and by gradually increasing the length, with your growing skill, you will soon be able to command quite as much water as is generally necessary to angling success. To be able to throw a long line is good, but to be able to throw a light and accurate line is better. Divest your mind of the idea, which really does seem as if it were the obsession of many an angler, that the fish are sitting in the water considering the pleasant spectacle of yourself wielding the rod and that they will confess themselves captive in proportion to the grace with which you acquit yourself. The trout are really not busying themselves about the question whether it is your thumb or your forefinger that you will place along the rod. All their concern is with the objects which are passing over their heads in the water. If such an object be like one of the succulent insects in which they delight they are apt to suck it in. That is the obvious case from the trout's point of view, a truth so obvious that it certainly would not be worth insisting on were it not that so very many anglers act as if it were a dark and hidden mystery to them, by reason of their inveterate habit of considering the whole matter entirely from their own and not at all from the trout's viewpoint. Take, therefore, to heart the counsel that is implied in a witty maxim from a witty book and "Do not throw with a long line when a short one will answer your purpose." The shortest cast that puts the fly over the trout's nose is more to that purpose than is the most skilful and longest which places it far the other side of him. At the same time I may tell you this, for your warning, that you need not lay the flattering unction to your soul of supposing, after you have acquired some facility in throwing a twelve or fifteen yard line, that every reduction from that length makes the cast more easy. Very much the contrary of that, the hardest, perhaps, of all throws to make, apart from the casts which have their own special vexations in the form of bushes and adverse winds, is the throw which shall place the fly nicely and lightly over the head of a trout rising quite close to you. In such a case, you see, you get none of the help of that so grossly called "belly of the line," with its weight, to take out the light cast in which all terminates. You have, as

we say, with no great mechanical exactness, no leverage. That is why I counselled you to begin practice with some twelve yards or thereabouts, so that you might have the advantage of this Sancho-Panza-like development of the fat part of the line. The medium length is easier than either extreme.

I want you to catch a fish now with the straightforward method of casting whereof you have made yourself master. There are refinements to which you may be introduced later. Accomplished to the present moderate degree, you may soon get a rise in yonder ripple. Look, the point of the rod is snatched down; the hook is in him. Stay a moment and realise what has happened by some happy accident, for such realisation may help its repetition in a manner not quite so accidental. By happy accident, as I say, you had the rod at just about the right angle to keep the line tolerably straight. Had it not been straight, had there been bends and loose loops in the line, it is likely that the fish would not have been hooked. In that rough water he really hooked himself. He was obliged to make a snatch and dash at the fly if he were to catch it at all in such a turmoil. So he did really some of your proper work for you. It will not be so always. If he had risen in a quieter place, where the stream and the fly borne by it went leisurely, then he would have taken the fly in like quiet and leisurely mode, and "when he finds that it does not answer his purpose he will spit it out before it has answered yours," as that witty little book from which I lately quoted has it. In order to make it "answer yours" you must—again to cite that chronicle of pithy wisdom—"do something with your wrist it is not easy to describe." So wise is the book that it refrains from all attempt to describe that indescribable—which, if wise, is not highly helpful. I will be less discreet, out of my desire to aid you, and will again suggest that you consider the question from the trout's, rather than your own, end of the business. So regarding him, we find him with the fly, for a moment, in his mouth; in another moment he will have ejected it—unless, before that second moment strikes you shall have communicated to it a quick flick which, if the fish be not

TO THE TROUT UNDER THE TREE: THE HORIZONTAL CAST.

more than duly favoured by Providence, should certainly fix the point in some portion of his mouth or jaw. Consider then how this may best be done. I think you will agree that the first and, perhaps, the only effective way is a quick but light lift of the wrist. There are lovers of paradox who will tell you that the way to strike is to strike down so as to make the point of the rod fly up. They are vain counsellors, as I think, both because it is surely only relatively to the rest of the rod that the point " flies up " as they say—not relatively to the line, which is the part of the apparatus which matters—and also because I never, in all my fishing life, which is a great deal longer than I could wish it, have seen an angler strike in this downward direction ; and I have had the good fortune to see many of the very best. So, this light, quick, upward flick of the wrist, which is good enough for them, the past-masters, may be good enough for you in your novitiate. I have virtually forbidden you the use of that supple, game-playing-developed wrist of yours up to this point, but now it may come in handy. At what moment, in response to the rise of the fish, you should strike, whether " half-volleying " or " after counting six," according to the differing maxims of the two widely differing schools, is a matter for consideration when your education is much farther advanced. Be it enough satisfaction for you that we have you with your first trout now firmly hooked and flashing through the stream while the rod bends responsive to its efforts. In what happier circumstances can I possibly bring this letter to its close ?

III.

STALKING THE FISH.

WHEN we parted company, at the end of my last letter, I left you in full enjoyment of what probably is the most ecstatic moment that your whole life will give you. You were playing your first trout. Ecstatic that moment is, but it is also crammed full of most heart-searching anguish. "He may get off!" "The gut may break!" He may get off, undoubtedly, through no fault at all of yours, just because he was not firmly hooked in the first instance; but the gut, if sound to start with, will not, unless it gets round a weed or other foreign body, break—always provided you give it fair usage, bearing upon the fish by means of the flexibility of the rod, but by no more than by the measure of that elasticity, keeping a constant strain, but never an excessive strain, on him. You must keep the strain constant, for otherwise he has every chance of getting the hook, thus allowed to sit loosely, from his jaw; but you must not bear too hardly, especially when he is first hooked. He is then in his most vigorous freshness. Allow him to wear off some of that freshness of breath and some of that energy of fin by a tolerably free run, if he insists on taking it. Hold the rod at something like an angle of forty-five degrees, and let the line go freely off the reel. If he does not run out fiercely, pull him, as firmly as you believe the gut will endure the pull, down-stream, for in so doing you both fatigue him and decrease the likelihood of his getting into weeds. Then, when you feel him tiring, when his runs grow less vigorous, reel him in, "give him the butt," as it is called; that is to say, hold the rod up vertically from your hand, so that it is the butt end that comes nearest to the fish. You now have all the strain of the rod's spring upon him. He comes

within reach of the landing-net. You have caught your first trout!

Of course, it is not always thus. But it costs no more to paint the picture in bright colours, and my idea was to describe to you how the thing should be done in order to achieve the end that you desire. There are about a hundred ways in which the thing should not be done, and which will defeat the achievement. You will learn all those for yourself quite soon enough by help of that best of teachers—painful experience. It would take a book to describe them all, and it would be a black book when it was done. So we will leave, for the moment, these many occasions for failure, and I will ask you to take a cast back with me to my last letter and consider what I there said about a certain part (the heavier part, which is the nearest to the rod's point) of the reel line of a past-master of the art of fly-casting going into the water with a very apparent splash. Try to visualise that, for it may then serve as an object lesson to you. Realise that this heavy portion of the line goes down into the water and, of its own movement and weight, is the immediate instrument of carrying out, away beyond itself, the lighter line and the gut. Try to induce your own line to perform the same delightful antic. It is a movement of beautiful grace in its straightening curves when rightly executed, and its achievement is almost as pleasurable as the very catching of a fish. You may take it as an earnest, too, of your ability to catch many a fish when you find yourself executing it tolerably. You have a very great deal more to learn yet, but you have acquired the essential secret: your hand has learnt to move the rod in such mode as to impart the right movement to the line: you have acquired appreciation of the right "timing": your sense of touch and of feel has been educated to respond to the hint given by the weight of the line up in the air.

This is the great essential. All the rest that I shall have to tell you—and I might go on telling from early morn until the cows come home, and still there would be a thousand and one things left to say—all the rest is, as it were, a mass of details, mere variations on the one theme. Thus far I have been supposing you casting with your right hand and

CASTING UP-STREAM.

over your right shoulder. It will not make very severe demand on your imagination to conceive situations such as may be created by trees and bushes and the like impedimenta on the river's bank, where a left-handed throw, if you could accomplish it, would be the more excellent way. It is greatly to be wished that you acquire ambidexterity in the cast, and it is not a difficult acquirement; nevertheless, some of the very best anglers never have gained it. They make up for its lack by great deftness in the back-handed cast with the right hand, the wrist being turned as for the back-hand stroke in tennis or rackets. For my own part I am hopelessly one-handed—that is, right-handed—but I can cast back-handed just as easily as fore-handed with my right hand, and so, with a very little practice, may anyone who has played the games into which the back-hand stroke enters.

Thus far I have said nothing, so as not to bother you with detail before you had conquered the essential, about the mode in which you should approach the trout and the river in which you expect to find him. The trout is a creature endowed with quick vision at certain angles from its eye, and with a very keen sensibility to vibration in the water. It behoves you, therefore, approaching him and his home, to keep low and to step, if you do step, with an Agag-like delicacy. I write "if you do step," because it is almost more desirable that you should kneel, or should crawl. The lower you can keep, even apart from any question of taking cover behind bushes or rushes on the bank, the less likely are the fish to see you; and for this reason it is often best, where possible, to wade in the river itself, for at least that portion of your splendid person which is submerged will then be hidden from the unappreciative eye of the trout. Again I will ask you to view the situation for a moment from his point. He is lying with head up-stream—you may be quite sure of that—therefore your approaches to him are most effectively made up-stream, from behind him. Just at the very first essay of your angling life I counselled you to a down-stream cast, because the down-flowing current would then straighten for you any looping of your line, but I said this out of pure charity towards your inexperience. The up-stream mode is that which has to be followed during

by far the greater part of any self-respecting angler's life, and on the dry fly rivers we may say that it is the only way. Soon you must be learning to make your approaches to the fish, whether you are wading or are on the dry land, up-stream, casting beyond him and letting the fly come floating down over his head towards you. One difference which this way makes, in comparison with the other, is the obvious difference that whereas, on that other plan, the flies were carried away from you by the current, on this they are borne towards you. That means, among other things, that they will be "fishing," as we call it—that is to say, floating in such manner and with such little encumbrance of gut attachment circling about them that it is possible they may attract the favourable notice of a trout—for a shorter span of both time and space than when you were casting down-stream. They will come hurrying towards you. And this implies again that you must be ready to pluck them off the water, by means of that lift of the rod followed by that flick which I tried to explain to you in my first epistle, before they have floated very far down. I am speaking now of a cast made straight above you when you are wading in the stream. As the flies come down you should gather in line with your left hand, so as to prevent too much slack line intervening between the rod's top and the fly. If you do allow too much of this slack, the result will be that if a trout takes the fly, you cannot strike him. That lift of the wrist so difficult to describe will expend its effect on the slack, and before that is straightened the fish, finding that the fly "does not answer his purpose, will spit it out before it has answered yours." If, on the other hand, you are casting "across and up" at, say, an angle of forty-five degrees to the direction of the current, there is no reason why you should not, if you choose, let the flies float down below you before recovering them for the next cast. They may thus catch an odd fish; but he must really be a very odd one indeed if he is to take the fly while your person, waving the rod like a coachman's whip, must be plainly presented to his astonished gaze. In the long run you will save time, and will cover more trout that are at all likely to come to the fly, by taking it off the water as soon as it has gone past the place where you know, or

hope, the fish to be. Just what those places of good hope are we will discuss a little later. For the moment I still have a word or two to say about the cast.

You have realised, no doubt, that, graceful though your figure be, the trout will view it with no gratified admiration, but with terror, rather, and will inevitably quit feeding if he catches sight of you. Hide yourself from his gaze, therefore, by all possible means, but especially by keeping low. And after what I have written it will be evident that, lowly as your own attitude may be, the rod, if you brandish it strictly in accord with my foregoing instructions, will be waving high in the air ; the light of Heaven will glint on it ; the fish are likely to perceive the glint and, accepting the glint as a portent of trouble, will dart off to their dark sanctuaries. Now, it was necessary in the first instance to instruct you in this more or less vertical brandishing of the rod, because it is thus that the line is most easily sent out. But, once you have acquired this first element of the art, you must go on to acquire further refinements. You must learn the horizontal cast. It differs in no essential, except in the difference of plane, from the vertical, but it is a little more difficult because the line and the fly are at no moment of it more than a very few feet above the water or the land ; therefore any little slackness allows them to touch water or to touch land, as the case may be. The cast has to be rather more carefully made, therefore, than the cast wherein the rod is moving in a vertical plane, just because a smaller error will bring the throw to grief. It does not allow so much margin for error. For my own part I do not find it nearly so easy to keep my wrist out of the actively working mechanism of the throw in this cast as in the other. I am compelled to use my wrist, though I try not to do so. Whereas in the former throw all worked, from the elbow, in a vertical plane, so here all, from the elbow—forearm, rod and line—works in a horizontal plane ; that is the whole difference. If you have the blessed advantage of ambidexterity, you must acquire this throw with your left hand as well as with your right. If not, if you are condemned, like your unfortunate mentor, to single-handedness, you must practise this horizontal cast back-handed as well as fore-handed. I need hardly point out to

you its most obvious advantage in keeping the flashing wand low, and therefore in position less likely to scare the watchful fish. It has also the merit of delivering the fly lightly on the water, almost as if it were a real insect delicately poising

YOU HAVE CAUGHT YOUR FIRST TROUT.

on it. For casting to a fish rising under tree boughs it is the only possible way.

I have already given you some useful hints about borrowing from a friend such angling apparatus as are at all likely to suffer injury by your unskilled efforts. I would urge the wise precaution most particularly in respect of your practice of a very useful form of cast which I will now attempt to describe to you: that is the cast for sending out the line in the face of an opposing breeze. Of course, if the breeze is a gale no skill or effort will send out the line; but in the teeth of any wind in moderation it is wonderful what your rod, rightly used, will do for you in this way. I say the rod will do, for always you should bear in mind that the spring of the rod is the immediate cause of the outgoing of the line. Your part is merely to set this spring working. Now, if, in face of the wind, you execute the vertical cast as I have described, and finish the flick with your forearm well above the horizontal, you will find that you leave the line much at the mercy of the breeze to blow back to you. To cast into the wind's face you must carry the flicking action further and lower. Your hand and forearm must come down right to the horizontal, or below it. Imagine yourself to be trying to flick the imaginary pellet of moist clay on to the water very little in advance of the rod's tip: it is wonderful how kindly the line will then cut into the wind if you time this flick rightly. Again, the timing is everything. Avoid using extra force. Grip the rod firmly, in this as in all modes of the cast, but do not use too much muscle. Remember, it is the springy rod top, not your biceps, that is sending the line out. And this movement will bring the top of the rod itself almost down upon the water. In one or other of your novitiate efforts it is nearly sure that you will bang the water with the rod top itself. I have never seen a rod top broken in the practice of this cast, but I have seen such aquatic bangings that I can only wonder I have not. That is why I suggest that, for your first practice in this throw, more even than in another, it is the part of a wise youth to borrow of a friend—perhaps, still better, of an enemy!

IV.

WHERE AND HOW TO FISH.

YOU are a tolerably accomplished fly-fisher by this time if you can execute with some certainty and accuracy the various casts suggested in my former letters. You may now much improve your accuracy of throw by practising your casting at daisies, or croquet hoops or any target you please on the lawn. The finest form of all angling is that of fishing with the dry fly which is pursued chiefly on the rivers that have their sources in the chalk—placid, clear, full of good fish food. Yet there is a special charm of their own in those faster streams where the fly is generally fished and taken in a state of at least semi-submergence. On the dry-fly rivers you seldom trouble to throw for a fish unless you see him rise; on the wet-fly streams you "chuck and chance it" as the dry-fly purist scornfully says, but you chuck, if you are at all experienced, only where the chance is good; and the necessary discrimination leads you to a study of the habits of the fish which is full of an interest of its own. The angler of ripe wisdom realises "the places where the fish lie" almost without taking thought on the matter; and this on rivers which he is visiting for the first time. Of course, on the rivers which are familiar to you and which you have fished again and again the haunt of every fish of note will soon be known.

Of this problem, as of some others, you may best find a solution satisfactory to yourself by trying to consider it from the fish's point of view. If you were a trout and desirous of feeding on flies that were coming down the water's surface, to what part of the broad stream would you betake yourself? It would be an insult both to

your human intelligence and to that of the trout to suppose that you would not resort to that spot where the flies were coming down most plentifully. Consider, then, where that spot is likely to be and cast your flies accordingly. Trout, like the eagles, will be gathered together where the carcase is.

If you consider the face of a stream when a "hatch out," as we call it, of fly is on, you will soon see that, unless a strong wind be blowing, the flies are apt to be carried into that course of the water where it flows most rapidly. That is a rule which holds good for all flotsam, living or inanimate, thus borne down the surface of a running water. There the flies will be gathered, and there the fish will await them. Down that same channel, then, you should float your artificial flies—and hope for the best. It happens less often that this fly-bearing current is seen to go down the centre of the river than to flow along one or other of the banks. On windy days the flies are nearly sure to be carried or drifted towards the bank against which the wind blows. Moreover, apart from the influences of either wind or current, there is ever the chance of an insect dropping off the bank's side. Each and all of these circumstances, together with the fact that fish usually have their haunts, when not on the active outlook for food, under the banks, dispose the trout to take up their stations there; and I will now give you a "tip" which you may often find of value in casting for these "under the bank" trout. Remember that, however lightly you cast your fraudulent little concoction of feather and barbed steel, you will never get it to poise on the water as delicately as the natural dun, with its hair-like legs. But in casting for fish under the bank, if you use a yard or so more line than is actually needed for putting your fly over them, and cast against the bank under which they are lying, then the fly, after hitting the bank, will fall on the water with a delicacy which you hardly can impart to it otherwise. That is a dodge for which you should be constantly on the look out for putting into practice. I am writing all this on the presumption, for the moment, that you are on one of those that we call the wet-fly rivers. On the dry-fly streams the trout

KNEELING TO A FISH OUT IN THE RIVER.

are commonly larger and more wary, so that you seldom fish for one which you have not seen rising.

Now, besides these currents down which the fly are apt to be carried and which, therefore, the fly-feeding trout will frequent, there is always a chance of insect diet below overhanging trees and bushes. It is likely that some of the best trout in the river will have their haunts in these pleasant and profitable places, fiercely ejecting from them any visitors of their own kind which come in the hope of a share in their banquet. I need hardly point out to you the value of the horizontal cast in placing your fly deftly over trout lying in these overhung shelters. Just another word or two about the places where trout are apt to lie, and then I want to refer back for a moment to this matter of the horizontal cast; for, however it may be on the wet-fly streams, you will do little good as a dry-fly fisher until you acquire some of its finer subtleties. Likely quarters, then, for feeding or expectant trout to take up, besides those I have hinted at, are the mouths of rivulets and subsidiary feeders of the main river. Any big stone in the water is tolerably sure to have a fish with his haunt behind it. They will often lie in wait at the top of a "glide," just where the bustling part of the stream begins to smooth off into a glassy surface. And an especially favourite place is that where two currents, after going in divided courses awhile, come together and flow down as one.

Referring back now to that horizontal cast, which you will soon find yourself using in almost constant preference to the vertical, it is scarcely needful for me to say that what I wrote about some of the heavier portion of the line going into the water with a splash applies to the vertical cast solely, and not to the horizontal at all. In the horizontal all falls lightly, or should do so. Moreover, I am far from saying that every fine caster whom you may watch will send any part of his line thus splashing even in the vertical throw. The methods of the very best casters vary greatly. The difference is well emphasised by Mr. Halford, in Vol. I of the Fishing Volumes of the COUNTRY LIFE Library of Sport. He there points out how entirely different are the respective methods of Mr. Marryatt and of Mr. Valentine Corrie; yet both were

CASTING TO THE FISH UNDER THE ANGLER'S OWN BANK.

master-craftsmen—the latter is so still, as I hope and believe. Mr. Halford we are obliged, alas! to speak of in the past tense. He was my own first and most kindly teacher. I have watched Mr. Corrie at work also, and therefore I can add that Mr. Halford's own style of casting differed again from that of either of these great men whom he cites. After all, it is but an analogous case with that of golf and of others of the arts and crafts. The club-work, the brush-work, the chisel-work, or what you will, differ under the hands of different masters, yet each will produce a masterpiece after his kind. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, that the case is not otherwise with the angler's rod-work.

But now you are so far advanced that you really deserve removal into a higher class. I will promote you therefore from the wet-fly stream and the "chuck and chance it" to one of those placid and pellucid rivers coming from the chalk, where you will fish only, or almost only, for the trout which you see rise. And, having guided you thither, my first word to you will be one which will make you revile me bitterly for many of my former words; for, after all the pains that I have led you to take to acquire the art of throwing the line out straightly, I have now to tell you that in order to do full execution on one of these dry-fly rivers you have to learn to cast the fly at the end of a line which shall not be straight.

My reason for inculcating the straight line throw was, in the first place, that it is the more difficult throw to achieve—among wet-fly fishers it is almost the mark of expert distinction to throw a straight line; the duffer throws a wobbly line—and, in the second place, it is hardly to be thought that you will ever learn to place the fly accurately with the wavy line unless you have already learnt the art of accurate placing with a straight line. Understand me: it is easier to throw a wavy line, a line that has slack places and curves in it, than it is to throw a straight line; but it is easier to place the fly just where you want it with a straight line than with a wavy one. If you stop to think a moment, you will realise that this must be so. With the straight line, the calculation needed for pitching the fly is one of simple straight length; with the wavy line, each of the waves has to be taken into account. In actual work, as almost goes without saying, the

angler does not worry through any such brain-fagging business as these curvilinear estimates would suggest. Experience and practice have taught him to realise, without taking thought, how much allowance to make for the slack waves which he will make in his line and to throw with a length, nicely adjusted, in accordance therewith. And experience and practice are the only mentors which can lead a man to this realisation. But all this time you are panting, I know, to be asking me for another reason—the reason why it is desirable to throw a wavy rather than a straight line. I will tell you. You see a fish rising at an angle of forty-five degrees, we will say, above you and rather towards the other bank of the river. Now, suppose you throw a dead straight line, pitching a fly two or three feet above him—what happens? What happens is this: that the moment the dead straight line alights on the water the force of the current begins to pull it down; and before your fly, though so accurately pitched, has floated down the two or three feet to the fish the influence of the current-borne reel-line has dragged it in towards you.

The effect of that is, for one thing, that it does not go over the fish at all; perhaps it goes as much as a foot this side of him. But there is also another, and a very much worse, effect. It is very fortunate if it has gone so much this side of him that he has not seen it. What is far more likely is that he has seen it; and with fatal result. Once more I will ask you to put yourself in his place and to look out at his world with his eyes. It is a world much made up of things floating over him at just such pace as the current goes. But what is this portent that all on a sudden has been presented to his astonished gaze! This thing, this fly of yours, has gone not with the current, nor at the current's pace, but faster, and across it, and, most terrifying of all, has left what we call a wake, a cleft in the water, behind it. None of the ordinary flotsam does this; so that you, seeing with the trout's eyes, behold an unfamiliar and, therefore, a fearful sight; you flee away in alarm, or, at best, sink lower in the water and lie there in suspicious, sullen, sceptical mood. This phenomenon, which I have thus endeavoured to describe, is that "drag" to which you will have heard so

DOWN THAT SAME STREAM YOU SHOULD FLOAT YOUR ARTIFICIAL FLIES.

many a dry-fly fisherman make damning reference. It is his bane and his undoing, but at the same time its avoidance, in the various currents of the river, is the touchstone of his expertness and the source of very much of the peculiar and exclusive interest belonging to this special department of the angler's art.

Now, if you have been able to reconstruct, by help of my words above, the circumstances of the case, you will at once appreciate the value of the wavy line. Whereas, when the line is straight the current at once begins to drift it down and so communicates drag to the cast, the energy of the current on the wavy line is first spent in straightening out, or transforming into one extensive curve, those several lesser curves, and it is not until that is done that the reel-line begins to drag the fly; by which time the fly may have gone over the fish's head. If it have not—ah, consummation devoutly to be wished!—actually gone down his throat.

I have known one or two men who were very expert fishers indeed, in the sense of their ability to throw a straight and a light line, and yet who failed to catch half as many fish on a dry-fly river as their craft really entitled them to expect, just because they did not appreciate what is, indeed, the very obvious truth that I have tried to set out above. One in particular, on the Test, lately deceased and lamented by every friend who knew him as the best and least selfish of sportsmen, caught relatively few fish, though he could throw a beautiful line, until someone, in an unhappy hour for the trout, led him to realise that his line of lovely correctness was not only wasted on the fish of that river, but that they would far more readily take a fly shown them at the end of a line lying in what appeared, by comparison, to be slovenly curves. Once he had realised it he easily modified his practice accordingly, with results which immediately threw very many of the best trout families into heavy mourning.

Thus far, since we have been on our chalk stream, I have supposed you to be throwing for a fish well out from you in the water; but one which you will constantly find, and a fish, moreover, which offers you a very fair prospect of forming a closer acquaintance with him, is the fish that rises close under your own bank. Creeping up, you will be able to get almost behind him. In this instance, if you were to cast your ordinary line, with some wavy slack, that would involve some small length of the gut passing over his head before the fly reached him. If he noticed the gut he would be apt to greet the fly with a very cold and unresponsive eye. There is a peculiar cast which you should try to make

for a fish so lying, and for every fish, too, which you may see rising straight above you when you are wading. This is a cast which shall give the fly a little flick round at the end, so that it falls on the water rather to the left—presuming that you are throwing right-handed and fore-handed—of the rest of the line. I have called this the " interrogation cast " because the gut, with the fly at its end, falls in something like the form of the mark that we make after writing a question, thus—" ? " If you will throw horizontally and give a little check, with the slightest possible pull back, as the fly reaches the limit of its outgoing, you will find that you will achieve it after a little practice. Personally, I can do it to admiration on a lawn ; it is only when I try to put the interrogation mark to the fish that I usually do it so bunglingly that his answer is almost inevitably in the negative.

V.

FINAL WORDS TO THE TROUT FISHERMAN.

JUST one more word about that eternal question of "drag," which, as a dry-fly angler, you will find to be always with you, and then I think we may leave the problems of the cast, presuming you to be as proficient in them as any hints of mine can make you, and after that I hope to discourse to you more at large and in less didactic manner.

This "drag" becomes peculiarly vexatious and difficult to avoid when the fish that you wish to attract is lying in a current travelling less fast than that which intervenes between you and it. In such a situation it is evident that the reel line will at once, on alighting, begin to be carried down more rapidly than the extremity of the gut to which the fly belongs and which is in the less rapid current where the fish lies. The only way, so far as I know, to avoid the fatal "drag" in such a case is to make such a cast as shall pitch the line on the water with its "belly" convexly up-stream. It is not so difficult of execution as it sounds, provided you have no bushes behind to complicate matters, and no unfavouring wind. The wind which is unfavourable for this particular throw is that which we rather prefer in less exacting conditions—that is to say, any kind of up-stream wind. What favours the cast, and makes it easy, is a light down-stream wind.

You will see why this is so: if the wind is up-stream, no matter how cleverly you put the reel line on the water, with its curve up-stream, the wind will almost certainly catch the light cast and chuck it a foot or two up-stream as it comes to the water, thereby defeating all your best laid

plans. On the other hand, if the wind is opposing the cast, it tends to throw back the lightest part of the line, relatively to the rest, which is precisely what you want. It almost plays the game for you. To effect the throw in normal conditions it needs that you deliver the forward flick—of course, I am presuming that you are casting horizontally—with rather less energy than usual. It should be energy sufficient to make the spring of the rod take out the heavy part of the line much as before, but just insufficient to impart to this heavier portion such speed of movement as shall carry out the lightest sections to a straight line beyond itself. That is the mechanism of the cast—again, all a matter of pace and of timing—I cannot teach you, by written words, these times and paces; the mechanics are all that I can even hint to you. You must work out the rest for yourself by patient practice and by intelligent attention to the performance of your betters.

So there! You are now a finished fly-caster, as far as I can help you to that noble conclusion. There are fantastic casts, such as the "steeple cast," which chucks the line as vertically up as possible behind the back, and is designed to avoid catching in trees behind. I have seen it executed as a *tour de force*, but have never seen it combined with very deft and accurate placing of the fly on the water. And it is the fly on the water with which the trout concerns himself—you cannot remind yourself too often of that obvious but much neglected truth. He is no more likely to be caught by one than by another diagram traced by your line cleaving the air. When I come to say a few words to you about salmon fishing—they really will be very few words indeed, and as concerns the actual casting, hardly any, so enormously more fine and subtle a matter is trout fishing than salmon fishing, and so nearly do the lessons of the one hold good for all the circumstances of the other—we will consider the "switch" cast. But those circumstances are not nearly so varied in salmon fishing as in trout fishing. Had these been no more than hints to the commencing salmon fisher that I was starting out to give you, they might have been finished long ago.

I have indicated to you, or have tried to do so, how you should proffer the fly to trout rising in most of the different situations in which you are at all likely to find them. Of course, there are fish which rise in places where it is almost hopeless to invite them to look at the artificial fly. There are those fish in back-waters where the natural flies become becalmed, out of the stream, and go slowly circling round with a lazy trout occasionally rousing himself sufficiently from his laziness to gulp one of them down. It is rather a hopeless-looking place, all the less attractive because of scum, composed of tiny particles of flotsam, which always gathers in such situations. But this scum really gives you a better chance than you would have in its absence, for it evidently obscures things from the sharp eyes of the fish, even as it would from your own, and now and again, almost as much to your astonishment as delight, a trout may, as if in a fit of absence of mind, suck in one of your flies by mistake, and it is then " up to you " to see that he pays the penalty due for his error. And remember this for your comfort, that although on any one day it may be easy to find fish which it is impossible at the moment to delude with an artificial fly, still that is an impossibility which does not repeat itself at every moment and on every day of the year. A place may be impossible of successful fishing on one day and with one type of weather and one direction of wind, but when wind and weather and perhaps the height of the water are all changed, it may become perfectly fishable. Make a note of fish rising, if they look as if worth the catching, in these impossible places; resolve to pay them a visit another day when the conditions favour you more and the fish less. The most deadly weather of all—deadly for the fish, I mean—is that which brings a warm, light rain. It is weather in which flies are likely to be on the water, although some breeds, such as the Iron Blue, seem actually to prefer a blizzard, and the spots of rain evidently confuse the eyesight of the fish very badly. I have known a stretch of the Test where I hardly ever caught a fish, no matter how keenly they were rising, on a fine day, yet on a day of soft rain, such as I speak of, I have caught them there so readily that it ceased to be amusing; it was hardly sport.

The marking down of good fish and making a mental map of the places where such fish lie is a habit that you should practise until it becomes instinctive. It is valuable on every river, but most useful and essential on small streams. If it is a big water, like the middle or lower Test or some portions of the Itchen, which you are fishing, you may indeed walk up along the bank and look out for rising fish. You will

CRAWLING UP TO A FISH OUT IN THE RIVER.

do no great harm and cause alarm only to the fish within twenty yards or so. But if you try this perambulating manner up the banks of some of the small streams of the clear water composition, which we find in all that flow from the chalk, it is hardly likely that you will come within casting range of a rising trout, though you perambulate from cock crow to curfew. What happens in that case is that the fish flee up-

stream before you, one communicating its terror to the next, until they are going up the river like a flock of sheep up a lane, causing a small tidal wave to undulate before them. The only way, as it seems to me, on these small rivers, is to learn the haunts of the big fish before you begin to angle for them; mark down precisely, by this bit of spear grass or that bunch of king-cup, the spot which you mean to take up when you cast, and quietly crawl to it from well out in the field and well away from the bank. And this that I say in regard to walking along the side of the stream applies yet more emphatically to wading. If you wade up a small river you create a commotion and a scare indescribable. If you have a broad, shallow water, there is no reason why you should not wade so as to be able to cover the whole of it, and if you are fishing the wet fly down-stream, you may wade without causing the same disturbance in the minds of fish which you have still to angle for; but, for the most part, it is wiser to confine your wading, when you are fishing up-stream, to an occasional quiet step into the water and a few steps out and up in order to cast to a particular spot or to a particular fish. That, at least, is the practice that I personally both commend and follow. Nevertheless, although when dry-fly fishing I wade thus seldom, I am all for the wearing of waders —waders to the thigh. Thus clad you can splash through the overflow in the water meadows and take no wetting of the feet. You may say that knee-boots would suffice for this protection: and so they would; but remember that you are not to stand up to the full height of your fine manly figure when you cast to the fish. More often than not you are to be kneeling to them in a suppliant pose, and knee-boots are no protection for the knee in such a position. The knee is a joint very susceptible of rheumatism, and a most valuable joint which deserves all cherishing. With thigh waders you can kneel in dry comfort. Therefore it is that I both commend and wear them.

I do not propose to write anything at all elaborate for your instruction in respect to the flies that you should use, for several reasons. In the first place, the angling art is long and life is short, and any disquisition on flies, to be at all adequate, would need far more space than the whole of these

letters; and, in the second place, long before you have gone the length in your angling career to which I am now supposing you to have progressed, you will have heard as much discussion on this matter of flies as if you were living through the fly plague which pestered ancient Egypt. Probably it matters less than most of us suppose what fashion of fly we present to the fish. Probably what matters more than any of us sufficiently realise is the fashion in which we present it to him. Remember this particularly, that it is of the greatest importance to present it to him attractively, that is to say, in likeness to the natural insect, *on the first time of casting*. Remember that, whereas the number of the times of your casting for him mount up arithmetically, the possibilities of your catching him decrease geometrically. I mean, that if you cast for the same fish five times, your chance of catching him at the fifth attempt is not five times, but twenty-five times less than it was at first. I write this, be it noted, of the trout only; a grayling, lying deeper in the water, is far more likely to accept after many invitations than is the trout. Each repetition of the throw deepens the suspicions of the shy trout and determines him in his refusal.

Practically all that I intend to say to you about flies I hope to condense in my next letter, but for the moment I would say one word on the matter of gut. I am not going to advise you as to its stoutness or tenuity. Anglers differ in this matter in their opinions and practice. But this I will say—be your gut stout or thin, see that it be sound; see that it be not old nor frayed nor rotten. One of the most extraordinary instances of inconsistency and lack of reasonable sense of proportion that human nature has to show us, as I think, is afforded by the spectacle of a rich man who has paid many pounds for a salmon fishing, has made long journeys and has engaged boats and gillies and apparatus galore, and goes forth and loses a salmon because he thinks that "this old cast will do." I have seen it happen again and again, both with trout and salmon fishers. I have been guilty, in my degree—but certainly without the added aggravation of possessing riches—of the like folly. Do not, therefore, spare expense in your gut, for that is the worst possible economy; but I tell you where you may spare expense—in your landing

net. I see men fishing with elaborate and costly landing nets attached to them, which are intended to shoot out to great lengths to enable them to land a fish. How often is the extra length of use? How many fish do they land with the longer that they could not have landed with a shorter net! And how many extra ounces of weight have they been carrying about them all through the season in order to land this further out fish? I maintain that the extra weight imposed by the steel contraptions incidental to the telescopic handled net makes them not worth while. Get a simple, light, wide-mouthed net, and sling it over one shoulder with a piece of string. Lift the string over your head when the fish is handy for the net, and you are ready for him. It is not a beautiful device, but it has the beauty of simplicity, and it does not get jammed just at the crucial moment, as happens now and again to the more elaborate engines. And finally, I will give you this "tip" of my own devising. Have with you a little net, such as sponges are hung up in to dry, and when you catch a fish of whose weight you are in doubt as to whether it comes up to the limit allowed on the river, put your doubtful specimen in this; then put the hook of your spring balance through a mesh or two of the net, and so weigh him, allowing an ounce, or whatever is right, for the net's own weight. Thus you estimate him without doing him injury and can return him unhurt to the river if he does not "go the weight." The ordinary way of hooking the hook of the balance into the fish's jaw is hateful. "They" say it does not hurt him. How do "they" know?

Lastly (there is always a lastly after "finally," which is why so many fish are caught with the "last throw" of the day), call over in your mind a roll call of the things needful for the day's fishing before starting in the morning, and see that you have all with you, and also call it over again before sending back the car that has brought you to the river. "I've only known one really good day for salmon on the Wye," said an old friend of mine, who had fished that great river all his life, "and that was the day when I remembered, just as the car went out of sight round the corner of the Builth road, that I'd left my reel in it."

VI.

FLIES.

I SUPPOSE if we were to rate the relative importance of different points in angling by the books written about them and by all the talk we make about them, we should come to the conclusion at once that the flies were the things that mattered; that everything else was scarcely to be named beside them. It is a subject on which I am free to deliver myself of the perilous heterodoxy that I believe they matter very little. I wish you would get for your study a book called "Animal Life Under Water," by Francis Ward, M.D. I am rather glad that I do not know the writer, for if I did I should hardly like publicly to commend his book in an open letter such as this. But he explains well, both in text and by illustration, how objects appear to a fish's vision. He explains shortly, though it would take me far too long to try to make an even shorter sketch of his explanation here; but when you have read it you may then begin to recast your ideas about the imitations which you will float over the fish, or will try so to float. The total impression that I have gained from his book, so far as it concerns us here and so far as it can be summed up in a sentence, is: See to it that you get the form of the fly and the size like the original on which you believe the ffsh to be feeding. The colour matters little. I do not, so saying, at all take sides with those who will tell us that fish are colour blind, nor those who say that their vision is greatly different from ours, but I do say that since the colour of the fly, as seen from below, is almost entirely a matter of reflection of the colour of the river's bottom, it can signify very little what colour of its own we give it. It will appear to the fish either as a dull silhouette or with the reflected colour of the river's

bottom, reflected from the fly's under surface. But size is very important, and so is form. In these respects your imitation cannot be too exact, and yet the variation in nature is not so wide that a very large number of patterns is required to cover it. Of course, the gigantic May fly is an insect apart. I have no love for him. He spoils the rivers on which he abounds, creating a mad orgy of surface feeding, which is the duffer's holiday. And when that orgy is done the fish will usually not trouble to come up for any smaller fly for a long while. I grant you the May fly brings big fish up to the surface to feed which probably, but for him, would never be surface feeders at all; but I can make you no more grants in his favour. That is my last concession. For the rest, the duns do not vary greatly in size, nor in form either for the matter of that. The blue Winged Olive, I suppose, is the largest of those which you are likely to use, and with a series descending from that to a small Ginger Quill or Red Quill you should be well equipped. And you must have a similar series of spent flies to imitate the moribund people that go floating down with wings flatly outstretched, having completed their life's cycle. I almost think it is more useful to tell you what you are to avoid in the way of flies than what you are to fit yourself out with. Terrestrially, the present is an age of advertisement, therefore we are rather apt to think that a fly which advertises itself by a great appearance on the water is likely to attract the fish. But the blessed uses of advertisement do not seem to be appreciated by the sub-aqueous people. We are educating our trout, but not thus far. Avoid, therefore, those flies which will often be offered to you in the shops, that advertise themselves by an immense bushiness of hackle. It is not thus that the very delicate and finely limbed duns present themselves to the trout's vision. There are a few big and bushy flies which you may need, such as the Caperer, Welshman's Button, Alder and Sedges—these last in different sizes for evening fishing. If you fall short of Caperer when the fish are taking them, and put any one of these others of nearly the right size over the fish neatly, he is not very likely to decline it. But the duns are very finely spun, and so are all the spent flies. Their imitations should not be made with

as many legs as a centipede. Hackle, of course, represents wings as well as legs, but still fineness and transparency, not solidity nor opacity, are the qualities you want. You should have in your box imitations of the flying ants for use on hot days in high summer or autumn, when the ants are taking wing, and something you must have to amuse yourself with by offering to the fish, even if they do not seem to amuse the trout at all, when nothing but smut are being taken. Add an Iron Blue or two and some Tups and a few spidery patterns for fish that are taking submerged flies—I do not speak of the absolute "bulgers," which are seldom worth fishing for, so remote is the chance of catching them—and therewith I believe you are fully set out. I do not suppose for a moment, nor wish, that you should restrict yourself to this moderation. If the flies do not count for quite as much as is generally thought in the number of fish killed, they count hugely in the fun of the fishing, and in all the discussions about it of which anglers never tire, though they often make those who are not anglers very tired with them (but what do the feelings of a non-angler signify?), and a fisherman will not get all the delight that he ought to out of his high calling if he concerns himself with the fish alone of the people in the water. He will find his interest and pleasure much broadened if he will study the water weeds, and the water insects, molluscs, crustaceans, and so on. These creatures feed on the weeds, and the fish feed on these lesser creatures. For my own part I love the whole range of "Fly-fisher's Entomology" from Ronalds to my late friend and master, Mr. Frederic Halford, but I do not much believe in the scientific entomology as studied by the trout. Give him a good likeness of the shape and size of the real thing, and above all present it to him with as close a likeness as is possible to the way in which the natural insect presents itself. Do that and he will not be so discourteous as to look your gift microscopically in the mouth to inspect the colouring. Again, as always, consider the question you are putting to him from his point of view, for that is the point on which the answer hangs.

Now, the majority of these flies, when you present them to the fish, you will wish to come floating down to them on the

water's surface, for that is the way in which the majority of the real insect population presents itself to them. So you will either carry your oil bottle with you to anoint the flies with waterproofing paraffin before tying them to the gut, or else you will have waterproofed them well beforehand by soaking them in oil and letting them dry off. All these arts, as well as the knots by which you should attach flies, both for trout and salmon, to the gut, are they not recorded in the book of the chronicles of Mr. Halford and many others? It would be too long for me to attempt to describe them here. But a matter which I would press on your attention forcibly, though shortly, is the great importance of keeping your reel line in such condition that it does not get waterlogged. The writers on fishing entomology often seem to forget how much, in the appearance of the entomological specimens, depends on this. If you let the end of the reel line, by constant contact with the water, become waterlogged, sodden and heavy, it will sink, and it will drag the fly under with it. Always, at the end of a day's fishing, you should unreel all such portion of the line as is damp and arrange it in long loops over a chair back, or, better still, on one of the specially made winders. In the morning, before beginning operations, you should thoroughly grease it with the preparation which the shops sell as "deer's fat," though I expect it is generally grown on a sheep—any sort of grease will serve—which waterproofs it and makes it lie lightly on the water's surface. If I have had much fishing in the morning, I generally "fat" it again at luncheon-time, after letting it dry while it watches me eat my luncheon. And then again at dinner, if I dine before going out to fish the evening rise, I give it the same drying and fatting treatment. It is treatment good not only for the present purpose of showing the fly nicely and thus deluding the fish, but also for the ultimate benefit and long life of the line, which the grease seems to preserve. A good old line, with all the kinks of newness worn out of it and grown soft and supple, is too valuable a friend to be put in peril lightly. He is a friend worth some cherishing.

I am in favour of using artificial flies a little smaller, if anything, than the real. We have a natural inclination, I think, to the contrary, as if we thought that the larger the

fly the more it would attract the fish. It is a commonplace with the salmon fisher that if he has risen a salmon to a certain fly, he shall try the same fish again with a smaller sample of the same pattern. I believe the device to be good, and I believe it to hold good not for salmon only, but for trout also. I would counsel you to attend very closely to the feeding fish and see what they actually are taking, for sometimes they will rise in the midst of a multitude of down-going duns. You put over them as close an imitation as you can find of the fly on the water, and yet they will not take it. Often when it so happens you will find, by giving them closer attention, that they are not feeding at all on those duns which make up the great majority of the surface-floating insects, but are fastidiously picking out insects of another kind which are in a small minority—very likely some Iron Blue, for they are a favourite food. The trouble is that some of the things, such as the smuts and curses on which they feed, are so minute that it is impossible to get a pattern of artificial fly small enough to imitate them. The dark smuts and the grey smuts may be imitated, but there is a small white creature called the curse, and not miscalled by any means, which is quite too small for any imitation that shall hide even the tiniest hook. And by way of expressing my own views, just as I have already said to you, "Do not fish with a long line when a short one will answer your purpose better," I might add "Do not fish with a very tiny hook when a larger one will serve equally well." I do not think that the fish much mind a little of the exposed iron, and I hate the feeling, as I am playing a fish, that I hold him only by a hook so minute that at any instant its grip may tear out. There is, I admit, some triumph in killing, say, a four-pound trout on the smallest hook made, but there is more fun in killing two such trout on a hook just a size larger. So I, at least, estimate it.

I have spoken to you already about the utter, and very common, folly of fishing with indifferent gut, whether it be trout or salmon that you are after; but there is one antic that either fish may perform which may, if you are unlucky, defeat you, however quick and skilful you are—that is, if he jumps and falls back on the cast. If you do not drop the

IF YOU DO *NOT* DROP IN THE POINT OF THE ROD WHEN HE JUMPS YOU ARE NEARLY SURE TO BE BROKEN.

point of the rod so as to let the gut go slack when he jumps, you are nearly sure to be broken if he falls back on it. If you drop quickly enough, it is bad luck if you are broken, but it is bad luck which sometimes does befall. If much of the reel line is in the water the drop of the rod top does not communicate slackness to the cast quickly enough; the fish may come on it when it is tolerably taut—result, disaster!

Thus far I have been talking to you, with a little digression by the way, of how best you may float your fly over the head of the feeding fish. I wish to point out to you now that there are occasions when this perfectly dry flotation is not the best possible way of sending out your invitation to him. I wrote a little above about trout taking flies in a semi-submerged state. I say flies, though I am not sure but what it is the rising nymphs that they are so taking. Yet it is quite a different way from that mad under-water rushing at nymphs in which they are called "bulgers." At all events, they seem, though they break surface, to take the food, whatever it be, just beneath the surface. Therefore just beneath, rather than right on top, must surely be the plane on which you should try to show them your artificial fly. That being so, it appears as if the perfectly waterproofed pattern was not quite the ideal. It is really better that it should sink just a little. You are to cast it, be it understood, exactly as when you wish it to float quite surface-wise, only you wish it to sink, say, half an inch under water by the time it gets to the fish. The flies which seem to be taken best in this state of semi-submergence are the Tups and the spiders, that at least is my experience. So I always take out my spiders without any oiling. If I wish to float them over a fish I can always put some oil on from the bottle if I have it with me, or, at worst, you can fish the dry fly quite well without any waterproofing at all, only on the condition that you dry him longer in the air between casts. Of Tups I generally take out some oiled and some without oil. One merit of this fishing with the semi-submerged fly is that a slight drag is not so apparent as when the fly is surface floating, and another point in your favour is that if you should strike, thinking that the trout has your fly, when it is really a natural close to it that he has risen at, the strike will

not so inevitably scare him. What scares the fish, both in drag and in the strike, seems to be the cleavage made on the surface of the water, and, of course, this cleavage is not cleft by the fly itself so long as it is beneath the surface. The gut cast will be floating in either case, so some length of cleft water must be visible, but not immediately in front of the trout's nose.

I have written of dry-fly rivers and of wet-fly rivers, but I do not wish you to misunderstand this in the sense of a very hard and fast and impassable division. If you see fish rising to surface flies on a quiet stretch of your wet-fly, fast-going river, float your dry flies over them. I hardly dare to advise you to what extent you may venture to put a wet fly to a trout in the faster-going places, the mill races and the like of your chalk streams. The purist never does it; or, if he does, he never tells. The quality of silence is golden, and gold is very scarce to-day.

In my next letter I hope to take you salmon fishing.

VII.

CASTING FOR SALMON.

THE great problem of salmon-fishing, in my humble opinion, is not so much how, as where, to throw your fly. The manner of the throw was all important in the trout-fishing business and the "where" was commonly determined for you by the pleasant sight of the rising fish. For the salmon you will fish more by faith and less by sight, seldom seeing him or knowing, for any surety, that he is there until he seizes your fly. Moreover, that trout fly casting was, for the most part, an up-stream business; to the salmon you will practically always be casting down-stream.

This salmon fly throwing, then, is very like the down-stream throwing for trout, except that it is a two-handed instead of a single-handed job. I am sure that it is the tendency of most salmon-fishers to overburden themselves by the length of their rods. I must admit, however, that one of my own old and best loves was a large 18ft. greenheart Hardy rod of no mean weight. It would take out the line—and a long line, too—with glorious ease, and you felt yourself to have a power over the fish, when you had him hooked, such as I have never known with a slighter weapon. Still, a 16ft. split cane—and for salmon I like a steel centre, though, for lightness' sake, I would rather be without it in a trout rod—will surely do all that you will often find that you need to do on most of our British rivers; and it is a lighter thing to wield. On most small rivers it is, indeed, a grievous error to use a big rod. Not only does it fatigue you unnecessarily, but in the small rivers the fish are generally small, and you lose almost all the sport which the play of, say, a 9lb. salmon ought to give you if you have him at the end of an 18ft. rod

with line and cast to match. Those big engines are, as a rule, for the big waters only. But I do not wish to be too dogmatic, and have been careful to write that it is on "most," and not "all," small rivers that a big rod is not "in the picture," because the rule that big fish do not come into the small rivers is not without its exceptions, and also because there are some of these small rivers, such as the Awe and the Garry, which are so tumultuous, in which the fish are so vigorous and fight so hard in the strong water, and where it is so difficult to follow the fish, that a strong rod and tackle are very useful and not at all out of place, although the water is relatively small.

The most obvious difference between the casting for trout and salmon is that the former is a one-handed and the latter a two-handed business. Both have this in common, that the essential problem is one of timing, of allowing the right time, not too much and not too little, for the going out of the line behind so that the forward urge of the rod shall have the weight of the line to make full play with. Again, it is a question of having no slack, but all "live" line.

You will hold the rod, I presume, for right-handed throwing, over the right shoulder, well down towards the extremity of the butt with the left hand and with right hand well up. My own tendency is to hold the rod higher with the right hand than most anglers do. It appears to me that I have more power by so holding it; but you will soon learn for yourself the height of grip with the upper hand which seems to give you best ease of wielding the rod and imparting live movement to the line. It is all a matter of practice, and all so very much easier than the like problem with the trout fly that you will be delighted by your quick mastery of it.

There is no question, with the salmon fly, of back-hand casting; but it is quite essential that you learn to cast over the left shoulder, and with the left hand uppermost. This is exactly the action, reversed, of the right-handed throw over the right shoulder. There is no need that I should give you any detailed hints about it. Again, it is a simple achievement, dependent for success on the sense of timing. You will very soon get the knack of it; and you will get it

the sooner the more fully you realise that it is all a question of knack and that strength of muscle enters relatively little into it. Give the line time, behind your back, and bring it forward quietly; but do not get into the habit of going too lazily backward, because, if you do, you run a great risk of letting the fly come too near the ground behind you. It may catch in the grass—that does not matter; with a strong

SALMON FISHING: LEFT-HAND CAST.

salmon cast it will go through the grass like an elephant through jungle—but it may equally well strike on a stone, in which case the point and barb are very likely to be broken off. This is a very good thing to happen when you are first practising and are more likely to catch your own ear than any salmon, but it is a sad moment when you draw back the line without any resistance at the end, after a good "pluck" in the water from what you are sure must have been a very large fish, and discover that the very simple reason why it was a pluck *et præterea nihil* is that the hook-point had been broken off in a rock behind you a cast or two previously. Those are the moments that almost palliate the blasphemy of the old angler exclaiming that "Job's" patience was never really tried, because the long-suffering patriarch was not a fisherman.

The most common, so that we may almost call it normal, throw of the salmon fly is that which takes it out at an angle of something like forty-five degrees down-stream from the castor. It pitches there, away out in the water, and comes swimming round in the current towards the caster's own bank, presuming that it is from the bank that he is throwing. I believe that I have hooked most of the salmon that have come to my fly during my life rather soon after the fly has gone into the water, in this kind of throw, and before it has gone round very far towards the nearer bank. But, at the same time, I believe that if we could know how many salmon, in comparison with the few that actually seize the fly, pay it the compliment of following it round in the water, keeping their noses just a foot or so below, as if in doubt or wonder whether or no to take a pluck at it—if we only had an idea of the number of times that this tantalising process goes on in comparison with the comparatively few and entirely blessed occasions on which the fish does take a really good hold of the fly—if we only knew this, I say, salmon-fishing would, I think, be a sport more exciting than human nature, as commonly constituted, could be expected to bear. I say this because it has happened to me so often, going down the bank below the point at which a friend was fishing, so as to be able to watch what went on in the water at the

SALMON FISHING: RIGHT-HAND CAST.

spot where his fly was travelling, to see a fish perform just such a watching progress as I have described, "letting I dare not wait upon I would," and disappointing me fearfully by sinking back and down in the water again when my friend began to draw in for the next cast. That I have seen often, but I have also seen, though far less often, a better sight, that is to say, the salmon waiting and watching on the fly as it

went round, and then, on the drawing-in process beginning, seeming as if he could endure the uncertainty no longer, that he must "have a go" at this tantalising thing which seemed about to go up-stream away from him, and "have a go" accordingly he did. After which, of course, the band, led by the screeching of the reel, began to play.

I tell you this, not so much to excite your enthusiasm, which is not likely to be in any need of such incitement, but so that you may avoid the error which I am sure is often made in pulling out the fly too soon and too fast for the next cast, and before its chance of catching a fish on that present cast is nearly exhausted. There is another hint, nearly allied, which I think you may find useful also. I see many a young salmon-fisher, directly he comes to the edge of a pool, commencing to pay out line not greatly shorter than the maximum that he is able to throw, and to cast therewith to the farther margin of the pool. That may be all very well if it is there, under that far bank, and there only, that the fish are likely to lie, but I often have seen this fine exhibition of casting executed when the probability was far more in favour of the fish lying under the caster's own bank. In this case all he has done by his long casting to start with is to alarm every salmon under the near bank and destroy every chance of catching them. Often it is good policy to begin with quite a short line and therewith to try out the stream that is almost under your feet. Yet, again, you have to remember that what attracts the fish is not any graceful or athletic act on your part, or any particular curve of the line through the air, but the aspect of the fly in the water. That is all that the fish cares about; it is all that he ought to see.

That phrase, "all that he ought to see," reminds me of another tolerably obvious truth which salmon anglers are too apt to forget. The salmon has eyes. Every trout angler, especially with the dry fly, conducts his operations under the assumption that he has to deal with a quick-sighted fish; the very same man, passing to a salmon river, will sometimes set to work as though he supposed a salmon to have no eyes at all. It is true that the salmon is less likely to see you than the trout, because he lies deeper in

the water and because the water in which he lies generally has a broken surface, but he has his eyes, for all that. And you may remember, too, that you fish for him from above; that is to say, that as he lies in the water his head and eyes are towards you; he has that much the better chance of seeing you than the trout to which you cast up-stream. I do not want to give you any precise instructions on this point; only I do want to suggest to you that you should use your intelligence in regard to it. A vast number of anglers show so little intelligence in this regard; and I am convinced that they have lost very many salmon which might have been added to their bags because they have gone to work as if the fish were blind, and have scared them away before they began to fish for them.

I may point out to you that though we speak of the salmon "fly" as of the trout "fly," it is scarcely to be thought that any angler imagines that the salmon takes this so-called fly because of its resemblance to any winged insect. A much better name for it is "lure," which has no deceptive description about it. If the ordinary salmon fly looks like any of the aquatic creatures, it must surely be some of the iridescent crustaceans, and we may suppose that the movement of the lure at the end of the line, now stopping a moment, then suddenly darting on, and fighting across the current of the stream all the while, must be rather like that of a shrimp or prawn propelling itself by jumps. It is quite useful to remember what we imagine the lure to look like in the salmon's eyes, because we then, almost instinctively, do our best to impart to it that movement which shall make it most lifelike and most attractive. And, so saying, I touch the edge of a mightily fierce discussion, some arguing that you ought to "work" the fly constantly, with an up and down or see-saw movement, others that you should let it go with the current and do nothing. I venture on no dogmatic opinion; the more so that I am aware that on the Northesk River were two professional fishermen—river keepers—of whom one was an extremist of the cult of "working the fly," the other no less extreme in his conviction that you could never catch a fish unless you let the fly come round "naturally," as he said. It was always found, at the end of the year, as

GILLIE ABOUT TO GAFF.

I understand, in spite of the wide difference in their methods, that these two old gentlemen had caught almost exactly the same number of fish. As for my own practice, for what very little value the mention of that may be, I generally let the fly come round as the current pleases to take it where it is in a strong water which keeps the fly playing and the line tolerably taut. Out in a slack, dead water I always work the fly. Indeed, in a still pool, it is hardly possible to give any appearance of life to the fly except by jigging at it.

Scarcely less fiercely debated among salmon-fishers is the question whether you should strike a salmon, especially in rough water. Some will tell you that a salmon, turning as he takes the fly, will always hook himself, that your striking only tends to pull the hook out of his mouth. On the other hand, some say (and I am quoting, on both sides, the opinions of the best salmon-fishers I know) that they always strike a salmon as hard as they dare. As for the argument about pulling the hook out of his mouth, they reply that if it is to be pulled out thus, it could not possibly hold while the fish was being played and brought to gaff. They affirm that the strong strike drives the hook well home in the fish's jaw. I must confess that in my own practice I am a confirmed striker, and I believe the arguments of the strikers to be perfectly correct, that if a hook is to be dragged out by the strike it would never have held while the fish was being landed. Yet I will go so far with those who say that you should " never strike a salmon in rough water," as to agree that in the strong current a fish usually takes the fly with such a rush, and turns so quickly in it, that the hook will almost surely be driven well in past the barb without any act of the angler. Yet even in that pleasant case, I do not think the extra " jab " does any harm.

VIII.

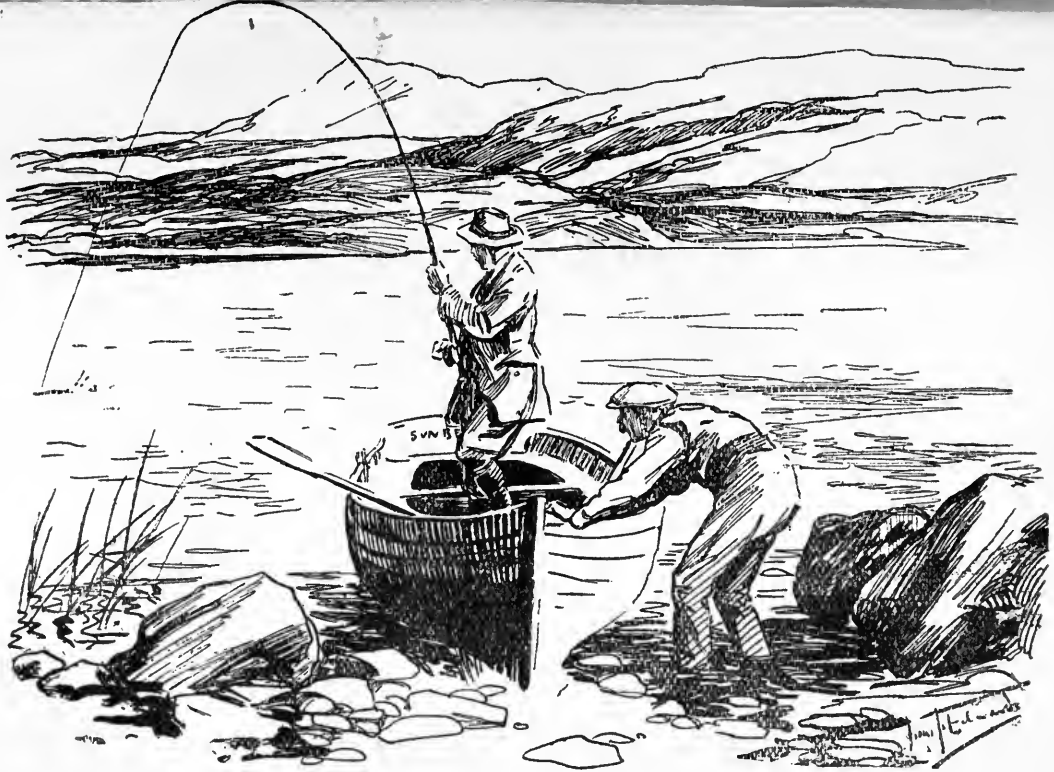
MORE ABOUT SALMON FISHING.

BEFORE passing to some final words about casting from the spinning rod, I must write a line about a very pleasant throw of the fly, the "switch," that is invaluable when trees and bushes are behind you. Here, and for good reason given, you must not send out the line behind your back. I believe different anglers have different methods, but my own, which answers tolerably, is to gather in the line in my left hand to such length as I think can be shot out by the cast. Then I lift the point of the rod and pull the part of the line that is on the water partly out of the water, and the rest of it, so far up-stream that the fly is almost at my feet. By this time the rod is pointing at some forty-five degrees up-stream and about the same angle from the horizon. Then I swing the portion of line that is in the air down-stream again, in so doing bringing the rod nearly vertically up to my right shoulder, and then, with a forward cast, the aerial part of the line is thrown out over the water in "a belly," the gathered coils in the left hand are released, the weight of the heavy "belly" shoots these straight out through the rings of the rod, and the same influence lifts off the water that portion of the reel line and cast which is lying on it, and throws them straight out beyond itself. It is not nearly so difficult to execute as, I am afraid, this rather complicated description might suggest. I would far rather do it than write of it, and so—to do it—I will leave you. Again—bear with the tedious repetition—it is essentially a matter of correct timing.

Towards the end of my last epistle I remember writing that the term "fly" was very misleading by way of description of the lure that we commonly use for salmon catching.

Far better, as I think, to call it simply "lure," without attempting definitin of the original of which it is a copy. The truth is, in spite of all our talk about salmon "flies," that we never fish for salmon with anything intended to represent a "fly," nor present the lure to him in any manner which a natural fly possibly could suggest. Of course, salmon have been caught accidentally with floating May fly, when the angler was fishing for trout, but that does not affect the argument. But as we are always really fishing for salmon with lures, probably presenting themselves to the salmon's gastronomic attention as imitations of the crustacea, therefore it never seems to me that we are descending from a higher to a lower form of sport when we quit the long rod used for the throwing of these things that we call the salmon flies and betake ourselves to our spinning rod for casting minnow, spoon bait or prawn. If I have ever, as has happened to me on a discoloured stream, forsaken trout flies and tried the Devon minnow for these fish, then I have always had the guilty feeling that it was "not cricket," that I was lowering myself as a sportsman in so doing. With salmon it is quite otherwise. No matter how we may talk "flies," it is never the delicate likeness of the delicate insect, most delicately to be presented, that we are proffering to the salmon. It is always a grosser business than fly-fishing; it is always, really, an affair of showing him something which we hope he will mistake for a live thing swimming freely in the water; it is never something which we would have him take for a thing floating on its surface and descending with the stream.

There is a great charm, to me, in the ease with which you can flick out the minnow, or whatever the lure may be, from a short spinning rod, the distance to which it will fly and the accuracy with which you can pitch it. Assuredly I do not write as any master of the art of spinning, but it is an art so easy, relatively to fly fishing, as to be very flattering to the learner. There are one or two first principles to be grasped, and when they are once learned the rest is a matter of practice. I believe, however, that half an hour's practice on a lawn, with an efficient teacher, should enable any intelligent person to go out forthwith and catch a



LANDING FROM THE BOAT TO PLAY HIM.

salmon with a minnow. I am, of course, assuming that he will throw from off one of the specially made, patent, free-running reels. To hold the coils of line in your fingers and let them fly off without a tangle is an art which some few men whom I have watched with admiration have brought to a wonderful perfection, but it is an art which demands years of apprenticeship, and few become masters of it even so. For all our practical uses the labour-saving reels are good enough, and I should commend them to every young angler, if only because life is short and the angling art is long. You will be tolerably tired of my telling you of the virtue of correct "timing," yet I have to repeat that monition once again. The throwing out of the bait, off the reel, is done more by a swing than anything in the nature of a flick, although the elasticity of the rod's top joint, much stiffer and steelier than that of the fly rod, gives all help in the cast. It is done by a swing and a turn of the body, and, of course, your finger will be checking the line, so that the weight of the bait does not pull it off the reel until the instant that you release it to go hurtling through the air, the choice of the exactly right moment for release combined with the pace of swing, gradually increased to its maximum at the moment of letting go, constitutes successful throwing. I notice that beginners are apt to allow the bait to depend with rather too much line from the rod top as they cast. A very few feet of line is sufficient measure.

You will make much better work of it if you cast from one of the short spinning rods made for the purpose, than with a stiffer top affixed to your ordinary fly rod, as an alternative to its own proper top. This is a device which commends itself to some because it reduces the paraphernalia to carry; but the spinning rod is a small, and not a very expensive addition; you certainly can do better with it; and the spinning work is not very good for the more delicate fly rod. Moreover, in salmon fishing, you will generally have a gillie.

I write generally, because that has been my general experience. Nevertheless, the days of salmon fishing to which I look back with most keen delight are those when I have been out alone, and have gaffed the fish for myself with a small "telescopic" gaff, which can be carried in the

pocket. But that is work for a small river, where the fish run small. Do not be deceived and do not accuse me of any coward counsels when I say that wading in rough waters on big rivers, and especially where the rock surface is very slippery, is an entertainment not to be engaged in without great caution. There are places, such as the Benchill stream on the Tay, and portions of the Nith beat, on the Wye, where I should hate to go wading without a gillie in attendance to pull me up if I made a false step ; and when you are consumed with the ardent excitement of a good salmon at the line a false step is made quite easily. But apart from such help as he may give you in such a relatively unimportant detail as saving your life, the real value of a gillie should be in showing you where the fish are likely to lie. You will observe that I am speaking of the intelligent and observant kind, who knows the water, knows it at all its varying heights ; the other kind of gillie is not worth wasting words on. He ought to be able to tell you where to pitch your fly at each cast, and just at what point as it comes round you are likely to feel " a pluck." And you will be surprised, I think, at the number of little runs and places that look hardly worth a cast, to the uninstructed eye, that he will induce you to try—now and again with result as blissful as it is unexpected. I say nothing in respect to all the aid that he will give you as an expert gaffer. That is a part of his craftsmanship which should go without saying.

Equally, as a matter of course, we may look on his ability to manage a boat. It takes you to the places where, whether casting or " harling " from it, you will have best chance of a fish. Presumably, when you have hooked a fish he will land you as soon as possible, so that you may follow the salmon along the bank. I do not know that written words of mine can help you much in the play of a big fish. You must let him have his first big rush or two, when he is fresh, with little check, unless there is special reason to keep him out of some particularly nasty place. Very likely he is far too strong at first to check even if you would and at all events a run out or two help to tire him. But after this prelude, I am sure that the mistake which most of us who are amateur fishers make in playing a salmon is that we are

GIVING HIM THE BUTT.

too light with him ; we do not give him the butt hard enough or trust enough to our tackle, which should be very shrewdly tested each morning before going out. The professional fisher, the keeper, brings his fish to the gaff much quicker.

I do not think that you will find his advice in the matter of flies very valuable. As I have already written, "fly" is a complete misnomer for the attraction which you proffer to the salmon. But we have to go on misnaming as we have

gone so far. The chief thing seems to be to get the size of the lure right, to suit the tastes of the fish, which are curiously influenced by the size of the water—thus, in a big river swollen with its spring volume of flood, you may fish with an enormous fly, 5ins. or 6ins. long, and nothing less will induce a fish to look at it. On the same river when it has fined down to its autumn clearness you may be doing your best work with a fly scarcely larger than the March brown which you offer to a Teme trout and with a relatively fine cast to match. Get the size of the fly about right, remember the old rule, which for all its age is still not out of date, that a bright fly seems to be taken best when the sun is out and high in the sky. Put on your Dusty Miller or some such twilight coloured fellow as the sun goes low, and a dark fly for a dark day and water. There is really not a great deal more "to it" than that in spite of the reams that have been written and the words that have been talked.

The gillie has taken us back to the so-called "fly" again; and away from the spinning rod. I have, indeed, said all that I need to on that subject. I do not care to indicate any particular make of the spinning reels which I have commended, because any such hint might savour of trade advertisement. There are several good kinds to be bought. You must get a friend to advise you. You may have gathered that I do not speak with much approval of any form of fishing other than with artificial fly for trout, though I am far from being a like purist in regard to salmon. I would rather say that, strictly speaking, we never fish for salmon with fly—fly, properly so called—at all. There is, however, one kind of bait fishing for trout which is a very fine sport. It requires exceptionally keen eyesight. I mean what is called clear water worm fishing. When rivers have run down very fine and clear the trout will lie out, sometimes in very few inches of water, and by slinging to these a small red worm at the end of a fine cast they may be caught with an ease—if all be executed rightly—that is quite surprising. It is surprising, because the water is so clear, the sunlight, very likely, so strong and the fish are so visible to you, wading up towards them, that it seems impossible that they do not see you, or the rod, or the line. Yet they take the worm in

these conditions finely. But a very keen sight is needed, for you must not understand from what I say that you will see every fish, or nearly every one, to which your worm comes, and your only intimation that a fish has your bait is apt to be an arrest in the down-stream travel of the cast. It is eye-straining work watching the silver line of fine gut on the white water under a bright sun. The worm is best

DOING YOUR OWN GAFFING.

delivered with an overhand, slow "bowling" action and with a long, light rod. No flick must be given or the worm will be torn.

Except for this sport, rather spoiled for me, I must own, by what is perhaps a rather feminine objection to putting the worms on the hooks, there is little attraction in bait fishing for trout.

I believe, too, that having brought you thus far, and presuming you to have imbibed to the full this fount of wisdom which I have made of my inkstand, I may now dismiss you as a very tolerably finished angler, not only in those higher branches which alone we have specifically discussed, but also in all the rest, which really differ only incidentally, and in the fact of being cruder and simpler, from these. You have the keys to all the secret treasuries of the angler in your ability to cast from the fly rod and the spinning rod. These arts include all the rest. Or, should you occupy your business in great water, and go sea fishing, whether it be off-shore or in estuary work after the up-running bass, or in pollock fishing or whatever it may be in the open sea, it matters not, you are master of every situation so long as you can throw both fly and bait. What lure to use, where to place it and how to work it in the water—whether fast or slow, deep or shallow—all this the master of each particular art may tell you. He should have nothing to tell you about the general principles of the art, which are wholly comprised in what you have learnt already.

ON SHOOTING

BY

THE HON. DOUGLAS CAIRNS.

ON SHOOTING.—I.

THE VALUE OF EXAMPLE.

TO sportsmen of riper years several seasons of almost total abstinence from social shooting may have meant a certain amount of inconvenience inseparable from the upsetting of crusted habits. Even those who took it thus were in a minority. Most of us had enough to do otherwise, and too much by far to think about. But to the youth of Britain those four years are a dead loss in the matter of sporting education; and that the youth of Britain intends to shoot, the market for "lets," and even for "sales," is a sufficient indication. Even the boy of unmilitary age prior to the Armistice has lacked that experience which goes far to shape his prospective qualifications, not only as a good shot, but also—and this is far more important—as a safe one, and, incidentally, as a welcome guest now and perhaps as a tactful host in the future. For such a desirable consummation is the result of observation of the best models and imitation of their technique. Going out with a keeper may teach a boy the habits of game and vermin, and then the elements of shooting, the safe management of a gun in limited company; but not so well as would going out with his father, if his father is of the right sort and can spare the time. Many fathers of the right sort can scarcely buy cartridges at their present price! The keeper's "style" in shooting is usually a nightmare, unless he be one of the competition-winning order, in which case he will improbably be a good keeper. The latter is more skilled in the use of traps and climbing-irons than of the "deadly hail."

But the interruption in the career of a boy of the age under consideration is as nothing compared with the

disadvantages attaching to a very large number of his elders—not those who were lucky enough to have served their sporting apprenticeship before that fatal autumn of 1914, but the class to whom the war has brought various advantages which open up the prospect of a shooting career. To these fortunate standers on the threshold a few hints, it has been suggested, would not come amiss.

Shooting, though a pastime, is also a science and an art. But when undertaken in company it is a species of game; and, in common with other games, is conducted under rules, some of which are traditional, others, arising from modern conditions are added to or modified from time to time as these conditions change. These rules, based largely on considerations of safety to one's fellow-sportsmen, fairness to the quarry, and unselfishness all round, are unwritten and unwriteable, but they are nevertheless rules. He who would master them after his boyhood ought not to be above putting the clock back and doing as boys used to do half a century ago, viz., accompanying a shooting party in the rôle of observer only. To anybody gifted with ordinary powers of observation, without which a shooter is a private nuisance and a public menace, a few days spent thus will be worth a library-full of instructions.

Shooting, as a pastime, or even as a business, may be undertaken by the shooter alone, divested of any particular moral obligations save the care obviously necessary to avoid firing shots which might injure men or stock, seen or unseen; the object being usually to secure the game, no matter how little consideration is wasted on the nature, sporting or otherwise, of such shots as may present themselves. The question of *meum* or *tuum* does not arise. The shooter educating himself solely thus will have learnt a good deal about the habits of the game, but nothing of the etiquette which differentiates the sportsman from the gunner. He will have much to unlearn when he shoots in company. To begin with, the "lardering" of beast or bird by his own particular effort is a secondary consideration. He has ceased to be solely responsible for the bag, which was all-important to him as a solitary shooter. He is now one of a party, be it a party of two or eight or any intermediate number, and his

. . . OBSERVATION, WITHOUT WHICH A SHOOTER IS A PRIVATE NUISANCE AND A PUBLIC MENACE.

every action, or abstinence from action, is to be judged, or pre-judged, in the light of its potential effect on the safety, convenience and pleasure of each member of that party—not merely every shot taken or refused, but every movement, noise, gesture. And such self-control adds not merely to the success of the day, but to the active enjoyment of him who practises it. Our young shooter will learn—if he keeps his eyes open—that the experienced gun who has imbibed as a boy the keenness and wile of the "lone hunter" with the correct—almost traditional—behaviour of the sportsman-in-company will get more shooting in the course of the day than anybody less well equipped. A team of such guns constitutes perfection. There is no mutual interference, nor any fear of it; no noise; no looking the wrong way; no stealing a march on one's neighbour; no selfishness. And in that word lies the summing up of the whole matter. True, there *are* jealous shots in the highest class of performers. They are well known, and tolerated in spite of their jealousy because of their efficiency. They do not add to the harmony of a day's shooting, and are noticeable on account of their scarcity in such circles, whereas in the ranks of mediocre shots they are more plentiful. Do not imitate their methods.

An attempt has been made to point out to young shooters that the unwritten rules governing social sport can only be mastered by the exercise of a combination of unselfishness, observation and proper instinct. I am assuming that the would-be sportsman has spent his boyhood otherwise than in the gradual, perhaps unconscious, acquirement of the rudiments of correct behaviour in the field; the "receptive" period, from a mental point of view, is past, and he will need to make up for lost time by assuming the attitude of a disciple. But the safe and effective method of handling a gun and a certain amount of accuracy in its use can be learnt by mechanical instruction. Exactly as the young dog can be rendered fit to take the field, without unduly disgracing himself, by preliminary lessons in obedience, watchfulness and self-restraint taught in the garden, or even in the dining-room, so can the young shooter resort to one of the many "shooting schools," where he will find an instructor. He will also find that he knows little, and even that little may

"LIE UP" NEAR HIS ROOSTING PLACES.

have to be unlearnt. It is worth the expense. All shooting is going to be expensive. A pair of first-class guns may cost £200 just now. You may probably pick up a second-hand pair for about half that figure. There must be many such in the market, bearing the melancholy label, "Property of an Officer, deceased," or belonging to cripples, physical or financial. Before purchasing have the gun or guns "vetted" by their maker, and also ascertain whether they can be altered to fit you well. Avoid "full-chokes," single-triggers, etc. If you have been handling a rifle during the war, try to forget all about it. Even an expert sniper will probably be a bad shot with the gun, *if* its use has not been learnt before or concurrently with that of the other weapon.

When you have made yourself fairly proficient at clay pigeons, going away, crossing from either side, and overhead, you will learn a great deal by "taking on" the real live bird, and opportunities for doing so should present themselves without difficulty. Get leave from a farmer, a class which preserves a Gallionic attitude towards these pests which ravage his crops; a class secure in its guarantees, doles and various forms of compensation. It seems a thousand pities that the wood pigeon is a non-political bird; once he were scheduled as "game" many a hand would be against him. Meanwhile, however, he will afford you an excellent test, not merely in accuracy of aim, but especially in quickness, decision, alertness, self-concealment, immobility, whether you tackle him coming in to the turnips, or "lie up" near his roosting places. Do not go to the same spot too often; be in your place early. Picking up pigeons is, in itself, good practice for marking; they are not easily lost, owing to the trail of light feathers shed in the fall. When not feeding on roots they are good eating. Sometimes, however, these birds suffer from an epidemic of some complaint akin to diphtheria in the throat and upper crop, disgustingly evident. In this case prudence suggests their being burnt. A wooden decoy, mounted on a light, stiff pole, which can be secured to a tree, is useful on occasions, seated, of course, beak to windward. For use on the ground dead pigeons can be so arranged as to decoy the living, but a tame bird confined by a brace and tether is far better. He should be reared from

the nest, and makes a bold and confiding pet, and will live to allure his kind to destruction for years. The "brace" consists of two tapes knotted together at half length; of the four ends thus formed, two are carried from the knot (which forms the centre, its position being on the bird's back), in front of the wings to meet the other two, carried behind wings and legs; the four ends are joined and attached to a swivel for the tether. Any bird-fancier will show you how to make a brace.

Take, then, every possible opportunity of practice, and cultivate the habit of rapid decision and "crisp" discharge. Poking and "following," *i.e.*, dwelling on the object, are futile sources of danger when shooting in company, both to your fellow-guns and to the beaters. There is no danger in rapidity, which need never preclude the lightning-like mental question: "Is the shot safe?"

The young shooter has been likened to a disciple, glad to sit, metaphorically, at the feet of the experienced sportsman. Actually, however, it will be greatly to his advantage to induce one of the latter order to sit at *his* feet, or, rather, to share his butt, or stand behind him when partridge driving or killing pheasants. I am assuming that he has already gone through a short apprenticeship as an observer, unarmed, and has thereby imbibed some rudimentary knowledge of right and wrong. At driven game of all kinds a little coaching by an expert will work wonders and inspire confidence as nothing else can. Take, for instance, a grouse drive: the novice needs to be told what and when to shoot, and why; to lay his plans each moment during the active period in the drive with a view to getting off his two barrels effectively; selecting always bird No. 1 with definite regard to prospective bird No. 2; never firing his second barrel at a difficult bird if an easy one is coming on; never losing his head, nor turning round to shoot behind when birds are approaching. All these mistakes, plus the universal one of not shooting soon enough in front of his butt, the beginner will inevitably and frequently make, but if he be lucky enough to secure the assistance suggested, even during one or two drives, supplemented by a few words of explanation and criticism while waiting, he will be saved from forming habits difficult to eradicate;

IS THE SHOT SAFE?

he will do the right thing instinctively. Once he has mastered the principles of handling one gun to advantage there is no harm in his using two, provided others are doing so. But dexterous fingers, well oiled ejectors, and a cool head will do a lot of execution with one gun, especially early in the season. Later on, when the big pack streams over or down the line, two guns seem all too few.

There are one or two words of advice I would like to give before leaving the subject of grouse-driving, though, *mutatis mutandis*, they are applicable to other forms of shooting in company. Driving to butts or to a wall ought to be, humanly speaking, accident-proof. (A ricochet off a concealed stone is perhaps the only excusable risk, if indeed any risk involving the loss of an eye or other such injury can ever be excused.) That it is not always so is due in nine cases out of ten to indecision, *i.e.*, dwelling on the object.

In the earliest dawn of grouse-driving the butts were placed at wide intervals—even 70 yards apart—with the hazy idea that such an arrangement minimised the risk of "the gentlemen shooting each other." The result was, in theory at any rate, just the reverse: a bird passing half-way between was only within certain killing distance when actually in line. Now, however, the distance on well-managed moors varies from 20 yards (in exceptional cases only) to about 40 yards, and thus one's neighbour on either hand is so readily visible that the shooter who fires down the line of butts ought to be prohibited from occupying any one of them. In the case of "sunk butts," the most deadly arrangement, if there is not a post to show you the line at a glance, put a mark, *e.g.*, a stick, or a couple of peats where you can see them readily.

The jealous shot has been mentioned as one of the evils we sometimes encounter—one of the flies in the ointment. But the jealous picker-up is comparatively common and can be most objectionable. You will easily recognise him, starting on a cruise the instant that the drive is over, round, or beyond his proper limits, gathering all birds doubtfully his own plus any others he can, intent only on getting his own number, exasperating his neighbours, and putting them wrong in their count; unless, indeed, they take the opportunity of scavenging quite close to the offender's butt, a region which jealousy prompts him to explore last of all. When such a person is attended by a loader and dog infected with the same moral obliquity, the annoyance caused is often marvellous, when one remembers that we are by way of shooting for pleasure. Things go harmoniously as a rule when individual scores are not made too much of, the converse

being the case when each man's score is published at the end of the day, or, worse still, recorded in a book, a practice I admit having only once come across. But it is usual for the host to keep an approximate list of scores, and necessary as a check on the birds brought in and to avoid "bunches" being left forgotten in the butts, etc. Nobody likes being at the bottom of even a private list. Some men want badly to be at the top.

You may occasionally meet a shooter who keeps a book in which he records his individual figures—or, rather, the figures which, by recording and reading over to himself, he ultimately persuades himself he has attained. Such records will not deceive any other reader, and are therefore seldom exposed to public criticism. Finally, remember that the jealous shot may be tolerated or even welcomed as a guest for reasons which are probably absent in your case. Wherefore make a study of his methods, and resolve that, whatever else you may be, you will be as unlike him as you possibly can.

II.

MAINLY ON "DRIVING."

IN my last letter I pointed out the difference between the occasions when it is your duty to kill or try to kill every bird properly yours, *i.e.*, nearer to you than to anybody else, and those opportunities for sundry little courtesies, of which the most ordinary consists in leaving to your neighbour any birds which would afford him "prettier" shots. In the former category are included grouse and partridge driving, though even here you must not take me too literally; when there are plenty of birds, try to select those unlikely, if spared or missed, to afford shooting to either of your neighbours. And, when the big pack advances up-wind, should you be in the line of flight of its foremost birds, let them pass you altogether rather than risk turning back the lot by premature shooting. This is just the kind of "crisis" when the presence and advice of an old hand in your butt will save you from committing an indelicacy which, according to Talleyrand, is worse than a crime. Do not whistle or otherwise announce to your neighbour the approach of a bird which you intend shooting yourself, nor when your neighbour is obviously annoyed by your doing so, nor when he cannot fail to see the approaching birds; it is apt to make him think there are others which he *cannot* see. There are some excellent sportsmen who are a perfect nuisance in this respect. Do not be so intent on watching your neighbour, in the hope of "wiping his eye" or taking a bird behind him when he is "empty," as to neglect birds approaching you. Such a proceeding will make you feel foolish, and if of a sensitive nature may spoil your shooting for some time. All such little happenings leave their mark on subsequent performance. Never lose your temper with

either yourself or your loader. If the latter is slow, the cause is either want of practice or flurry; rather, tell him how well he is doing, and not to hurry. It is thus that certain men of exceptional disposition can improve a bad loader by 50 per cent. in the course of a drive or two. One of these, than whom not very many better shots exist, his friends—and he has plenty—will recognise behind the initials "W. F. F." If you could meet him and persuade him to give you a lesson, you could dispense with any further perusal of my letters.

Your possibilities as a welcome guest will be assessable, to a certain degree, from your conduct in your butt; but it is the "pick-up" which will reveal to your neighbours the innermost recesses of your soul. You have been already warned against the direct and open misdemeanours; let your courtesy and self-restraint regulate the actions of your loader when he assists in the search, and of any ladies accompanying you; remember that your neighbours are precluded from argument with either. And, above all, be careful with your dog. I conclude you will possess one; to be without one robs a day's grouse-driving of half its pleasure. You cannot accurately mark down more than a very few birds, nor can your loader both mark and load. Try to carry in your head the number of birds you have down in front and behind respectively. You may even use a card, divided into four quarters, and mark each fall with a dot; this is all right up to a certain point, but scarcely practicable when dealing with a lot of birds, or even with a few in a high wind, when the fall is often impossible to locate save at the risk of losing other shots. The clearer, however, your recollections of what you have killed, and where, the less subsequent trouble you will cause to yourself and to others.

When embarking on a dog of your own, on no account aim at one of the galloping, wide-ranging, uncontrollable nuisances which (perhaps because he is even more useless for other forms of shooting) is recommended to you as a "good grouse-driving dog." He is probably the product of a system, and a very bad one, *i.e.*, enlargement of the dog at the conclusion of a drive, suffering him to pick up birds lying in the open in full view, tolerating his trespassing

MAKE HIM BRING EVERY BIRD TO HAND.

anywhere and everywhere, so long as he re-appears with a bird in his mouth. Soon he tires, standing idiotic and confused, annoying others less but his owner even more than ever.

Gather yourself everything you can see; the dog is wanted for *lost* birds; hunt him first on suspected runners before the scent is foiled; make him bring every bird to hand. If you suspect him of learning that he has only to go far enough in order to find something *somewhere*, irrespective of boundaries or orders, hunt him on a long, light "trash-cord." It is a nuisance, but will soon work wonders. And anyway it is less of a nuisance than uncontrolled hunting.

Partridge-driving presents fewer difficulties in the pick-up, inasmuch as the modern system usually involves driving the birds out of roots or other cover, and killing them more or less in the open. Here it is only the runner which really requires a dog, and he must be one on whom you can rely not to dash into cover about to be driven or commit any glaring crimes. You will not use him much. Before dismissing the subject, I want to "rub in" my remarks about the selection of a retriever. You may possess a ready-made dog, in which case the best you can do is to watch against his taking liberties. But I am rather assuming your aspiration to break a puppy yourself, which, given the necessary time, patience and sympathy, will be your wisest course. Eschew the "probable field-trial winner"; have nothing to do with the puppy whose *sole* qualification is his descent from Field-Trial ancestry. He may turn out a useful dog in the field trial (with small initials) which the competitive Trial never quite resembles; he will probably go a great pace, almost certainly too fast for his nose, which will be inferior to his powers of locomotion. A dog which over-runs his nose is usually deficient in brain, and it is with his nose, not his legs, that he can find game. In support of my condemnation of the importance hitherto attached at field trials to galloping, pure and simple, I may tell you, without disclosing a state secret, that prior to a recent meeting, abandoned on account of the weather, the judges had agreed to *penalise* this hitherto popular speed craze and to make their awards with due regard to the exhibition of qualities likely to prove of most value in the course of an actual day's

NEVER ENDANGER THE ADVANCING BEATERS.

shooting. That such a determination should have become necessary is surely sufficient indication of the extent to which "dash" can be abused. Let us have dash, by all means, but controlled dash; the better a dog's nose, the more active his brain, the less will he require to career aimlessly about; a dog lacking in either of these essentials will cause you constant discomfort and anxiety. It is on his return journey, bird in mouth, that speed saves time, not in his outgoing theatrical prances. Some keepers seem to think that a bird is never properly "retrieved"—has, in fact, no business in the larder—unless it has been mouthed by a dog. Try to cultivate the opposite ideal—do not let a bird be mouthed if it can be secured otherwise.

For the scarcity of useful and reliable retrievers two facts are largely responsible. Walking up partridges in turnips is declining in popularity, and owners keep too many retrievers in their kennel. (The latter practice involves keeping retrievers *too much* in their kennel.) There was nothing wrong with the dogs who originated the field trial strains; on the contrary, they were unrivalled in their day and are unapproached now. Having owned one of the "pillars," whose reign added to that of his sire's extended to twenty seasons; having seen the "wavy-coat" supplant the curly, develop into the "flat-coat" and give place in turn to the Labrador, I watch with regret the gradual ousting of the latter or his mixed descendants (for the pure Labrador is almost extinct and the type quite altered) by the particularly useful strains of Springer spaniel now so deservedly popular. It is with a dog of the latter description I would advise you to start; he is nearly as good as a first-class retriever, and better than a second-rater by a great deal; you can use him for anything; in fact, you *must* use him for everything in order to develop his character and keep him in work. Begin his education early, not later than five months; get him first to "drop" to order and to signal, then to carry, lastly to fetch. When he is well grounded with a dummy, accustom him to carry young peewits, if the season allows; there is no better prophylactic against that silly disinclination to lift snipe or woodcock. Ground-game should come later, for the sake both of his mouth and general behaviour; here

the habit of " dropping " without hesitation will prove invaluable. Remember that the more he knows before taken out shooting in company, the fewer complications are likely to arise.

To return to our partridge drive. There are occasions—too many, you will think—on which you will have to stand close up to, or almost in, the fence. On others, you will be lined well back from it, where its height and density allow this ideal position, often portrayed by the sporting artists who reproduce our friends in immaculate spats. Whichever procedure is necessary, do not seek to improve your position at the expense of the line. You are a mere unit in the party. Should the order be to stand back, never under any circumstances whatever allow your accompanying lady, if you are lucky (?) enough to have one, be she wife, cousin, fiancée or what not, to shelter herself in the hedge in front of you. Apart from the danger from yourself and her liability to turn back birds which have run forward, she will baulk your neighbours, as will any living object out of the straight line. The only man I can ever recollect peppering (a horribly light expression for what may be a serious accident) was an under-keeper who had concealed himself thus and received in his gaiter the outside pellets of a charge which put an end to a sneaking fox. This was not in a hunting country.

It ought to be, but is not, superfluous to remind you never to fire at birds in front when there is the slightest risk of injuring one of the advancing beaters. Somewhat less obvious is the advice to obtain from your host or his keeper, *before* you take up your position for a drive, what are the subsequent plans, your own destination in particular. This will rule out any misunderstanding, which is bad, and shouting, which is infinitely worse. I cannot sufficiently emphasise the importance of absolute silence—silence with mouth, foot, whistle, whip, even with matches, when taking your stand in a fence. There is plenty of time to talk at luncheon, or at home, or in the close season. Attention to orders, abstinence from noise, alertness and so on, on the part of guests, all help to make things easier for the host. And the exercise of such elementary " obligements " will be to your ultimate benefit; you are less unlikely to be asked again.

III.

DOGS, GOOD AND BAD.

MY last letter dealt mainly with driving. Safety comes first, and dangerous sins, destructive to your career (and, incidentally, to that of others) are possible—a pessimist would write probable—in proportion to the size of the party engaged. Also, it is a fact, and a regrettable one, that you may get through many seasons, perhaps all your seasons, without an opportunity of taking part in the pursuit of grouse or partridges over dogs, ending your days unbaptised, as it were, in the font of true guncraft, uninitiated in the rites considered indispensable by our forefathers; rites whose observance made them better sportsmen in the true sense of the word than we are. They had more time at their disposal, I admit. This is all to their credit, in so far as it indicates that they were less keen on money-grubbing and content to spread their sport over a whole season rather than anxious to condense the killing of large quantities of game into a few days devoted to parties, reckoning methods equally as important as results. But, as this is a letter of advice, not a retrospective review, we will leave the past alone.

I feel certain that if you are lucky enough to see "dogging" carried out *in its best form*, you will enjoy every kind of shooting all the more, because many little secrets which you would otherwise leave unprobed or unnoticed will be explained and endowed with their proper interest. Had you lived in the days when a boy born in a sporting family used to find his chief delights, even at the unbreeched age, in the kennel, looking forward with scant patience to the time when he would be promoted to walk behind the guns for an hour or two, and thus begin the process—almost automatic—of imbibing the rudimentary principles of scientific

bird-hunting, observation would have served better than advice. But "the years which the locusts have eaten" cannot be recovered; the receptive period has been passed: wasted, from our point of view; provided, however, you are keen enough (and I rather think the "unkeenness" of a few years ago is now unfashionable) and inclined to go in for dogging either as a guest or on your own account, you could not make a better start than by allying yourself with some really good keeper or intelligent "handler" getting his puppies into form for work or field trials. Such a course will serve a double purpose, giving you a fair idea of the methods to be employed when handling dogs (for, although you are unlikely to handle your own later on, you must know whether your own man is efficient) and also enabling you to figure to yourself what your behaviour should be when armed with a gun instead of a walking-stick. It is to be hoped that what you see may create in you a desire to embark on a dogging moor of your own.

Hired dogs, if they come from the kennels of an owner with a reputation at stake, are sometimes a thorough success. It is advisable to see them at work if possible with their own handler, unless you intend to hire him too; this is better still. But hiring is only a makeshift; it implies missing the absorbing interest of "continuity" in your kennel, *e.g.*, watching the puppies coming on and developing their parents' idiosyncrasies, virtues and, perhaps, faults; studying the eradication of the latter by judicious breeding, and so on. This will come later. You must make a start somehow, and this I advise you to do with "made" dogs, not merely spring-broken puppies, of which you would require a greater number, for it is unwise to run a puppy for more than a short turn, or when tired, or nervous, or on a bad scenting day. Four really fit dogs per diem should see you through. With a kennel of six, excluding bitches likely to require seclusion, you will be fairly safe, and able to rest sore feet or strains. The weather is unlikely to allow you to shoot more than four days a week. But the six dogs must be honest and reliable, selected with due regard to the nature of the ground on which they are to run. Before the war such dogs could be picked up at prices ranging from £10 to

£15; last season any "skin on four legs" resembling a dog would sell for twice the latter sum. Whether the team be composed of pointers or setters or both matters little. The greater docility and the consequently smaller amount of preparatory work necessary in the case of pointers is largely mythical, nor, if real, is it an unmixed blessing. The pointer's feet are more tender, and to harden them properly preparatory work is a necessity. No amount of road work will harden the interdigital skin. Friction by heather is indispensable. Avoid open feet. The pointer or setter marches on his feet as surely as does an army on its stomach. And it is especially on our wet West Coast, where grouse are none too plentiful, that the combined conditions point to the tireless red Irish setter as the ideal dog. Another argument in his favour is his innate superiority on snipe ground, some of which is likely to be included in the amenities of a West Coast moor. Thus you will enjoy more days of his companionship—and as a companion he is hard to beat—than of the pointer's, whose coat and skin forbid his paddling in the marshes on a cold day late in the season, gallant though he is. In fact, the more gallant he is, *i.e.*, the higher his breeding, the more he will feel cold and wet, and I would advise you to tolerate nothing plebeian in the pointer. Satin coat and fine "stern" point back to distinguished ancestry. A vulgar pointer is an eyesore. When the rainfall is not unduly high nor the ground too rocky, the old Scottish breed of black pointer will give you more pleasure, if you have eyes to see, than any other. He looks, and is, the aristocrat of his race, and you must treat him accordingly. Have his feet well looked to after the day's work, and washed in a saline solution when inflamed. Do not expose him to rain or cold if you can avoid it, unless protected by a tarpaulin sheet when awaiting his turn, nor to long walks home if you have room for him in the car. A few tarpaulin sheets are easily strapped on to the pannier pony, and although you should never start dogging on a pronouncedly wet day, it is better to be prepared for storms.

Whatever the composition of your team, try to include in it one or two bold and wide rangers (steadiness is not incompatible with this quality) to enlarge on ground where

HE SHOULD BE AN ACCOMPLISHED "DOWN-WIND" HUNTER.

birds are sparse, or during that mysterious midday hour or two when they seem unreasonably hard to locate, reserving your closer hunters for the ground on which birds are more plentiful or for the more killing evening hours. When birds are scarce "all over," *never* prolong operations after five o'clock, unless you are only shooting the beat once.

Some critics may tell you that the colours red and black of the Irish setter and pointer recommended are against their employment. If you find either difficult to see, hunt the dog in an enamelled white collar. A low-crouching dog cannot be seen if covered by the ground, no matter what his colour may be. A sportsman unable to see a standing dog of any colour should consult an oculist.

One of your kennel should be an accomplished "down-wind" hunter. There are times when you want him badly. Such a dog is born, but can scarcely be made. You will learn to appreciate him soon, when you begin to realise the delicacies of the game; will admire his wary, slinking gait, tail no longer gaily lashed, but depressed in apprehension of flushing his game; nose down also to catch the stale foot scent which under these trying circumstances he must accept as "the only intimation." Once, however, he has reached the safe side, beyond the wind, what a treat it is to see him slew round and announce to you more plainly than by speech that he "has" the birds! There will be between the dog and yourself a most fatal situation for them, pinned, as it were, and forced to lie close. Try to profit by the lesson when your pursuit is of the old birds whose especial haunt is the high plateau of peat-hags or the Caithness "flow." Here you will require certainly the wisest and probably the oldest member of your team. He will teach you the game if you keep your eyes open. For it is no plain-sailing business, this cornering an old cock who can traverse the hags like a hare. You *must* get well beyond the dog, making a detour, and keep the quarry, whose whereabouts you will learn to guess, between him and yourself. The dog, to excel in this highly specialised work, almost needs a hereditary dash of the old "cercleur" instinct. (By the way, you should procure and study a copy of Mr. Arkwright's priceless monograph, "The Pointer and his

Predecessors.") Nothing paralyses an old cock grouse—or an old hen either—to the same extent as the knowledge that his particular peat-hag is blocked by a foe advancing on him from either end, and you will soon find that the destruction of old birds will show a marked result in the improvement of the moor.

You have already been cautioned not to start dogging on a day which promises to be wet. Birds lie badly or not at all; are wide awake on dry knolls or bare rocks, where they are not only unapproachable at the time, but also learn the habit of seeking safety in flight rather than in concealment. The effect of each disturbance is both lasting and cumulative; further, the young gain daily in powers of locomotion, and the parents are daily under less obligation to wait for their broods. Herein lies the necessity for rubbing in the maxim "old birds first," not merely by choice, but as an avowed practice the first time each beat is shot. The brood anchors the parents. The hold of this anchor is loosened each day by nature, *i.e.*, by development, and still more by man, *i.e.*, by disturbance. Make the best use of it before it is too late and the parents rise out of shot, taking their offspring with them and curtailing a season already too short. It will surprise you to find how well the covey lies once deprived of the parental wide-rising example, and it is impossible to lay too much stress on the double-barrelled importance of this killing of old birds, both for the season's bag and the welfare of the moor.

I cannot forego an allusion, under this heading, to the fact that driving is often recommended as a panacea for the destruction of these pestilential patriarchs. Most generalisations are faulty, and this parrot-cry has been so often repeated as to need some qualification. On many moors—*e.g.*, those situated in the north of England and the Border Country—the stock of birds is so large, so early hatched and therefore so wild, their wildness increased by absence of long heather and hereditary flying instinct, that dogging would be a farce. There are many other moors, by no means so densely stocked, where driving can serve the purpose in hand excellently well, up to a certain point, *provided* it is done early in the season and with a few beaters, and *provided* no very short

drives are undertaken. Barren birds can thus be badly hammered, while the coveys are to a large extent passed over. Unfortunately, many moors are ruined for dogging by being driven without being suited to driving, and even if larger stocks can be maintained on them than was the case under old methods, the odds are that the killing of old birds over dogs was neglected. Remember that driving postulates thrice the extent of ground and thrice the number of guns: the comparative number of days' pleasure per man under the respective systems does not present an insoluble arithmetical problem. And a moor of small or even moderate size will not stand many days of *good* driving to *good* guns, unless its situation renders it a "veritable game-trap," as the advertisements sometimes inform us.

And now to return to the all-important weather: rain and its effects have been discussed and abused: suffice it to add that an approaching or departing rainstorm often has the same disturbing effect as rain actually descending. Do not take the weather *too* seriously, or in some seasons and places you will seldom leave the house. But the Wind—with a capital "W"—is a factor which must ever be uppermost in your calculations: to It must strategy and tactics be subordinated: should It change in course of the day, you must have some alternative scheme for working the ground in readiness: at which end of your beat to begin, how to work the ground to the best advantage, how to approach each "point," even how to hunt for a dead or wounded bird: all these and innumerable other questions must be decided mainly by the Wind. There is no neutrality in the attitude of Boreas, Zephyr and Co.: if not in your favour, wind is the enemy's most powerful ally, the newspaper open to all the wild, dictating to them their each day's habitat and direction of flight and even their line of feeding. A hill-face exposed overnight to a strong wind will not carry anything like its proper stock of game next day: it is the same with deer, or hares, or woodcocks. Obviously you cannot work all day dead against the wind, unless your beat is a long, narrow strip lying in the right direction; and even so, such a combination would be undesirable for various reasons. A side wind is what you should generally scheme

DRIVING IS OFTEN RECOMMENDED FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF PESTILENTIAL PATRIARCHS.

for, zig-zagging at right angles to its direction, *i.e.*, across it, so as to cover a fresh strip at each time, wide or narrow according to whether scent is good or bad. The ground is to be covered, or "made good," not by your legs but by the dog's nose: the success of the operation will depend, ultimately, on the cumulative effects; try, therefore, to fill your new ground continually with birds from the old, instead of losing the latter for the day after each flush. In a really high wind choose a low beat, or keep off the hill altogether: dogs are nonplussed and birds blown anywhither. When, as must happen sooner or later, a down-wind beat is necessary, try, if you have any choice in the matter, to leave the roughest ground for this manœuvre: the broken tops if possible. Here you need not enlarge even your down-wind specialist already referred to, especially if you know the ground—for certain haunts never fail in certain winds—and if the wind be fairly strong, compelling the birds to lie under shelter of the little faces and hummocks where you can come on top of them unseen.

You will want a retrieving dog of some description for point-shooting rather than use one of your team for the purpose (which is apt to encourage an undue fondness for the foot-scent: it is runners which take most finding). Look out for a quiet, unobtrusive but observant dog, who should "drop" almost automatically behind a point till waved on.

IV.

"ROUGH DAYS."

PERHAPS the most enjoyable "rough days" in the more accessible parts of Great Britain are those spent on the "outsides" or undefined beats of large estates, those beats which are not exactly moor or covert or arable, but a happy blending of all three, with possibly a snipe-bog added: programme varied to meet any emergency; an impromptu drive for blackcocks, the birds being first located and the guns then posted as near them as possible; some turnip-fields driven *away from* the outlying coverts (excluded for convenience from the orthodox covert days, and where the existence of the birds is apt to be precarious) to which the cock pheasants, curling back high over the guns, placed in full view behind the beaters, afford incomparably better shots than if attacked ignominiously from the rear; a bit of mossland on which the pick-up may include half-a-dozen varieties. Such rough days—"what-not" days an old Lanarkshire keeper used to call them—are often productive of results as substantial as they are varied. But they involve the employment of a considerable staff, are undertaken by a party of guns and are to a great extent dependent upon game preservation. So, indeed, are the days obtainable on ground itself indifferently preserved and dependent for its stock on the proximity of a carefully managed estate. Here, the main object is to secure the game, whatever its nature, the quality of the shots afforded being a secondary consideration. This involves—*quâ* pheasants—killing them early, before the shortage of "wild" food has led them to harbour permanently in the coverts of neighbour Croesus. An

alternative, feeding by the "rough" shooter, results in criticisms of the "man who baits his ground"; unfair criticisms, I think, for the baiter, especially if he spares hens, may breed pheasants to be baited away by Croesus and his velveteened myrmidons. Nor will Croesus be ruined in purse or prestige by the absence from his preserves of sufficient pheasants to afford his less ambitious neighbours many a happy and healthy Saturday's amusement. You will notice as you grow older that the best sportsmen have not always the longest purses. There used to be, and possibly still is, a certain—or uncertain—amount of wild shooting to be had in the New Forest, by ticket. The restrictions attached, limiting the shooter to one beater and to the hours of daylight, seemed admirable, till the coming of the motor gave its owner an undue advantage over his less-favoured rivals—he could practically visit all the spots he thought worth visiting in the course of a day.

Then there are a few hotels where the shooter is accommodated and where the sport necessarily depends upon the numerical proportion between dividend (game) and divisor (sportsmen), while the migratory birds, the rough shooters' quarry *par excellence*, will probably make a better show in the bag than in the kinds of "shoot" previously indicated. And you will find that it is the migrants whose pursuit gives you most pleasure; their presence in numbers is usually a surprise; their absence a smaller disappointment than that of game which you expect to be resident; their circumvention a greater triumph than would be the case were you certain of finding them next day; their change of haunt according to the weather an interesting study. But the ideal rough shoot should harbour just sufficient resident game to occupy you when the migrants are elsewhere. Such a happy hunting-ground, I need hardly tell you, will not be found at your door. You may, perhaps, hear of something like it in Ireland, but nothing in Ireland seems to be reliable, except the unreliability of everybody and everything. The local gunner is apt to forestall the tenant, and other drawbacks in plenty seem to discourage those who have experimented there. While you are still young and unfettered by family cares you should look out for one of the "winter shootings,"

as they are called, on the West Coast of Scotland or on one of the fascinating islands lying off it.

The axe has been described as the woodcock's best friend, in the sense that young plantations replacing felled timber are, during a certain stage of growth, his favourite haunts. This stage is sometimes defined as the period at which the trees and under-covert permit his running freely in search of food, while the growth is low enough to afford shelter and warmth and to keep the ground soft enough for the probing of his greedy bill. But in reality, so long as there are soft feeding-grounds near by, he loves an undergrowth of rank heather.

In the locality recommended, it is mainly in long heather that you will find him. In the islands, generally speaking, there are no woods except hazel or birch scrub, and thus the felling of trees which has altered the features of the mainland out of all recognition, has no direct influence on the presence or absence of island woodcocks. Indirect influence may, indeed, be noticeable in time, *i.e.*, when, if ever, the devastated districts on the mainland are replanted, or the schemes for afforesting the glens bear visible fruit.

You will be very lucky if you can get hold of a piece of ground such as I occupied sixteen years ago. I will not give you its exact whereabouts: free advertisements are not the game, and prospecting will be a valuable experience to you; but I will describe my paradise and its inhabitants in order to give you an idea of what to look for. It consists of a promontory nearly 20,000 acres in extent, situated on one of our largest islands; on the north side, low rushy fields running down to the sea; on the south, a rocky shore (with the exception of a bit of crofters' ground) so wide as to materially reduce the formidable number of acres; between these limits, a waste of low hills and wide glens; "faces" clothed with birch and hazel scrub; occasional little snipe bogs; jumbles of rock and bracken. A road runs through the northern part of the ground to the narrow and rocky west end of the promontory; another skirts the loch which forms the eastern march; these roads bring one within walking distance of all the beats, though the

walks were quite long enough, especially in the dusk, over those trackless wastes. I used to bicycle, when arrangements permitted, so far as the roads served. The village and its inn, where the sportsman must live, are, as usual, some distance from the best ground, but one could always find *something* after a very short walk. Grouse were limited to twenty brace, and were killed for the larder when wanted, or to swell the list of varieties; they lay well when located—by a dog, of course—and never flew far. Black game were numerous, but consisted chiefly of packs of old hens, barren, and a limited number of cocks, also old, who used to go through the antics of that spurious "rut" which seems to be provoked by the lovely Indian summer days of October. Pheasants there were, too, gleaning the exiguous stubbles and scattered among the birch scrub. They roosted in the long heather, trees and foxes being absent. Cocks only were killed. Two or three coveys of partridges were invariably difficult to find, and, once flushed, had a knack of disappearing for the day. A cave held great store of rock pigeons, which were "bolted" by a man entering, and were shot at from above. I say "at" advisedly. Anybody who fancies himself as a performer with the scatter-gun should try these birds under similar conditions. His failure will purge him of much conceit. This cave was a long way off, and could only be attacked at low tide.

But the migrants were the chief attraction. November in that year was a very snowy month on the mainland, and my return to the island early in December found the scrub patches and heathery precipices well stocked with woodcocks. The walking was mostly rough, but the consequent difficulty in shooting (for one *must* keep one's eye on the spaniel) was largely cancelled by the absence of real trees. My best eight days resulted in a total of 160 woodcocks, plus etceteras. I do not think another gun would have helped me much: one wants to shoot in any direction on such ground, unhampered by any consideration—however brief—of manners or safety. Perhaps the most enjoyable of these days (though the number of woodcocks killed on each varied but little) was one spent in hunting the shores

PHEASANTS THERE WERE, TOO.

of a lovely loch, an island in its midst clothed with the giant Osmunda regalis fern, growing luxuriantly in that moist and frostless spot. The surrounding slopes were a chaos of heather and rocks and birch scrub, and the feeding-grounds adjacent put a juicy and succulent "finish" to the woodcocks which made others seem dry and tasteless by comparison. The figures on that day were: Woodcocks, twenty-three; snipe, two; grouse, one; pheasants, one; blackcocks, three.

And, while my game-book is open, I may as well give you my totals for the season, *i.e.*, half of October, three weeks in December and a fortnight of January :

Grouse	40	Wild fowl	1
Blackcocks	20	Pigeons	8
Partridges	13	Hares	17
Cock pheasants ..	54	Rabbits	7
Woodcocks	206	Landrail	1
Snipe	229	Cat	1

The final item suggests a warning : never shoot a cat in sight of any possible owner or owner's relatives. This island pussy had separated herself from the nearest human habitation by many miles. The rent paid was £100, including the wages of a keeper whose local knowledge was invaluable. Familiar with every likely hollow or patch of rushes, his unerring instinct as a guide through the wilderness almost suggested the presence of Moses in his pedigree. He, with a boy, constituted the staff ; no beaters, and therefore no restraint on shooting in any direction ; half the battle on broken ground where a woodcock flushed by the spaniel may fly anywhere.

The snipe made very pretty shooting, lying well to a dog, a wise old Irish setter, who knew where to hunt and where not to waste her time and mine, and would retrieve, when told, in a quiet panther-like fashion, without any of the fuss created by her rival, a bouncing Labrador. Two or three days gave bags of over thirty birds ; one day thirty-four ; a mere trifle in comparison to the holocausts obtained on a neighbouring island, where, however, walking in line is necessary ; an island offered on "a lease for as long as you like" at £10 about half a century ago, and now commanding a rent, I believe, of £500. The snipe-shooting there is the best in Britain.

There were a few hares on my ground, but practically no rabbits ; of the seven killed in the season, two fell victims to a right and left ; the farmer was an infallible snarer, and his land produced some of the finest Highland cattle in the world. In the summer they were to be seen cooling themselves in the Atlantic. Fortunately, he kept no sheep ; their presence is incompatible with the necessary

peace in woodcock coverts, which were scattered and unfenced.

The absence of rabbits, apart from my innate hatred of a pest which causes more waste and more ill-feeling than all other beasts shootable added together, and my loathing of his plague-bearing parasite-riddled carcase as food, was a blessing, enabling the spaniels to concentrate on their proper game, and relieving the gun of uncertainty as to the nature and value of each quest; rendering unnecessary all the whistling, rating and whip-cracking inseparable from the presence of these four-footed abominations.

The scent of the woodcock possesses a mysterious attraction for a dog used habitually in his pursuit. The very strength of the aroma, which is repugnant to a dog unentered (and the best "entering," as I have told you before, is effected on young peewits or curlews), produces in one who has, with work, acquired a liking for it, some deep joy which finds expression in various ways. For instance, some dogs will roll on the bird's excrement, the vigour displayed in the operation varying with the freshness of the traces. To the shooter this habit is a useful one in a premonitory sense, and emphasises the importance of keeping one eye on the dog *always*. The woodcock is a heavy eater, and leaves correspondingly large and frequent mementoes, plainly discernible on the dark ground, not only in his feeding area, but also actually in his diurnal resting-places. Then, again, his blood must have a penetrating smell, for I have seen a dog follow, on the ground, the line of a wounded cock on the wing, "pointing" on the way. It was not till the performance was repeated on snow that I could be quite certain what he was pointing at, viz., drops of blood. To track thus, in long heather, a dog needs a good nose, which this one, a retriever-collie cross, certainly possessed.

There seemed to be certain spots which always held a woodcock in certain weather; thus, in the frost—seldom more than superficial—various little mossy holes behind waterfalls seldom failed. The droppings here afforded proof of long and regular and well-fed residence. From one of these holes a woodcock could often be poked out with a stick. The ragged heather, bare beneath, was preferred in wet

weather to the more vigorous growth; dead bracken was seldom used for more than a day or two, and then chiefly by new arrivals, generally to be found in pairs, to separate after a few days' residence. Quite unaccountably, these birds seemed to be of a brighter colour than those which had haunted the ground for some time.

ANY OLD WALL IS A FAVOURITE SPOT.

One final remark as to beating for woodcock, applicable to all coverts, whether woods or mere patches of scrub; after beating, or hunting, the covert, beat or hunt round the *outside* carefully, for three reasons. First, birds you have flushed inside will be loath to leave altogether and will often

pitch near the edge. Secondly, there is in most cases a ditch or a stream near which woodcocks will be found more probably than elsewhere. Thirdly, any old wall, or remains of a ruined wall, at the edge of a covert, is a favourite spot. Walls make shelter from frost, and collect blown leaves; these in time form leaf-mould, beloved of the woodcock as easy and productive "prodding" material for his sensitive bill.

I need not enlarge again on the dog question; avoid the "long and low" stamp of spaniel, and you have plenty of others to choose from now that the Springer type is being sensibly bred. Such a happy hunting-ground as I have attempted to describe may give you a good deal of happy hunting before you find it; if the search entails some little exploration, you are to be envied; have you read Nicolson?

> Athens, Naples and Rome
> I would see them before I die,
> But I'd rather not see any one of the three
> Than be sever'd for ever from Skye.

V.

TO GUESTS.

SHOOTING is, at its best, so essentially a part of our well ordered British country house existence that failure to conform to the recognised code of behaviour, not only in the field, but "out of hours," as it were, will, if wantonly repeated, militate considerably against your social success. There are sundry little matters anent which a little care and forethought will save you immediate trouble and future heart-burnings. Most of these can be settled by the simple and direct process of enquiry; for instance, you are asked to a couple of days' covert-shooting at a house to which you are a stranger and where you are naturally anxious to avoid doing anything which may make you look foolish and prejudice your footing. You are afraid of taking too many cartridges, or too few; the former error will inconvenience nobody except the man who carts them from the station; shortage leads to borrowing and its attendant train of evils. One of your fellow-guests may have some to spare. Do not reward him by grumbling elsewhere that his powder gives you a headache or does not give as good results as your own; such complaints are sure to reach him sooner or later. You are more likely to borrow from the butler, who has probably borrowed (in the Israelite *v.* Egyptian fashion) from a succession of unlocked magazines or open boxes, and, in any case, you will scarcely be in a position to haggle about price or change. But there can be no harm in *asking* your host what you are likely to want. Ditto as to loader; *ask* either your host or a fellow-guest who knows the ropes. (Houses wherein a party of eight or ten guests, plus wives and daughters and ladies' maids, valet,

chauffeur and loader are accommodated without inconvenience or comment are no longer so numerous as to be probable sources of anxiety in your case.) There is no harm in taking two guns, but you will be wise not to use them unless others of the party are similarly equipped. Your loader can be of service as a cartridge carrier, or a stop, or in any capacity to assist your host. Remember, an extra man in the house has to be fed and conveyed from and to the station.

Some hosts object strongly to visiting dogs, and, considering the behaviour of certain of the latter, such objection cannot be deemed unreasonable. Apart from the annoyance caused by their conduct in the field or, worse still, the covert, their nocturnal serenades are not conducive to slumber. A dog may be quiet enough at home, reserving his vocal efforts for visits. In a full house somebody's room is sure to overlook the outbuilding whence proceed Jet's ululations. If in doubt, *ask* whether he will be welcome, and if you take him, see to his feeding yourself. I can still recall, after a lapse of nearly twenty years, the grating noise made by a certain retriever gnawing stones under my window. His owner, Irish and forgetful, seldom fed or housed him, but was, unfortunately, himself a sound-proof sleeper.

If in doubt *ask*, in course of the day's shooting, when by doing so you will save your host trouble. Remember he has, unless he be of the "leave-all-to-my-keeper" kind, a great deal to carry in his head. *Ask* before taking your stand what subsequent operation is intended. Thus, not only trouble but noise will be avoided; look to your host for signals and do not form one of a band discussing, *e.g.*, the price of stocks, oblivious to the real business of the day. When grousedriving, ascertain the system on which butts are changed, *i.e.*, whether moving up or down is the rule, and what "up" or "down" means. Do not grumble if yours is a flank butt; the position has many compensations, especially for the gun on the down-wind flank in anything like a cross-wind; also, if you shoot well, the flanker can, and probably will, help you considerably. Do not wait to get into your butt till birds begin to come over; there are plenty of opportunities for conversation elsewhere than "on the hill." After a covert-shooting beat, when asked by your

IF YOU HEAR THE TAPPING OF A STOP, BUT CANNOT SEE HIM, TELL HIM TO COME OUT AND STAND IN SIGHT.

host whether you have had much shooting, avoid making any reply indicative of dissatisfaction. Such replies, if often repeated, are apt to be interpreted as a hint that you think yourself entitled to a better place. You will often come across a man who always seems to get plenty of shooting no matter where placed; it is a case of "where Macdonell sits, that is the head of the table." The cynics remark that such a man

THE GUNS WALKING WITH OR STANDING BEHIND THE BEATERS GET THE FINEST AND MOST DIFFICULT SHOTS IN THE WORLD OF COVERT-SHOOTING.

always gets put in the best place, but this is obviously impossible where places are drawn for. A more charitable imputation is that the "lucky" sportsman attracts the game, and this is much nearer the mark. He allures the game, as it were, by his habit of total self-concealment, and never misses a chance through being unready or absent-minded: eye and ear are alert from the instant he takes up his position. Regard him as your model, rather than the gay conversationalist accompanied by a bevy of garrulous ladies who are just a little apt to forget that birds are neither blind, deaf nor stupid. When your stand is indicated by a stick, do not change your position unless instructed to use your own judgment as circumstances require. But on the less stereotyped and, therefore, more enjoyable occasions, when you are allowed a reasonable amount of latitude, be careful to choose a spot where you are least hampered by thick trees and can best command any probable line of approach. Need I emphasise the paramount importance of noting the exact position of neighbouring guns, and taking care that they note yours? If you hear the tapping of a stop, but cannot see him, tell him to come out and stand in sight. A bush may protect him from view, but not from danger. You will at times be told to walk with the beaters or to stand back behind them. Disabuse yourself of the idea that either proceeding is derogatory or devoid of possibilities. It is always interesting to see the proper execution of a beat and to note the beaters' difficulties and the behaviour of the beaten game. Do not shoot pheasants or anything else, bar ground game, going to the forward guns unless specially told to do so, and desist from firing, in any circumstances, before coming within range of them. Ascertain their position without having your attention drawn thereto by expostulation. And remember that there are beats, *e.g.*, little glens or dingles running up hill where the guns walking with or standing behind the beaters get the finest and most difficult shots in the world of covert-shooting.

I wrote a letter recently dealing mainly with the woodcock and how he ought to be shot. How he ought *not* to be shot, or shot at, you may, I fear, have many opportunities of observing in the course of covert-shooting days. The more

locally scarce the bird is the greater the desire to shoot him. This is only human nature, but the criminal recklessness which prompts a man to risk, at a rare bird, a shot which he would never think of firing at a common one has been responsible for numerous accidents. In certain company it is desirable to shelter one's eyes at the sound of that demoralising cry, "cock," while there *are* occasions when it is better to lie down very suddenly.

Systematic cartridge-pilfering is said to prevail in some houses whose inhabitants should, and doubtless do, know better. It is one of the few evils I have managed to escape; but you may be less lucky. "I am sure my servants are all honest," remarked a knowing old cynic, "but I notice my cigars last longer if kept under lock and key." And so will your ammunition, especially when sent out in the cart for replenishing supplies. The driver of such a cart has an idle time and many friends. If you send out a spare *bag*, tie a label on it setting forth plainly your name and its contents; loaders in a hurry are apt to open the first bag convenient. The last and most odious episode after a shoot, whether it has extended to hours or days, is usually to tip the keeper or keepers. The near approach of this moment, the anticipation of which is apt to poison or becloud a whole day's pleasure, is to be detected by mysterious muttered consultations among the guests and a semi-clandestine jingle of pockets or rustle of "Bradburys." Tipping is a detestable business in theory and execution. The box system saves a good deal of unpleasantness (such as the uneasy hanging about of keepers and guests, dodging the host, borrowing change, etc.) and is a boon to the guest who considers his own means or inclination the sole gauge of his proper contribution: a very natural view. To the guest who puts in nothing, it saves unpleasantness altogether, bar the feeling that he has done a dirty trick, and probably lied to his fellow-guests into the bargain. But I confess there are many keepers whom I regard as old friends and on them positively enjoy pressing my exiguous present, knowing that the personal element involved in the transaction, and eliminated altogether by the box, means a good deal to them. The intelligent keeper generally, of whatever nationality he may be, will appraise you by a standard

other than that of money. He knows what class have the money now ; more than likely he knows what you can afford and will think none the better of you if you fail in the sense of proportion. I could tell you of men who have protested against accepting money at all, and that in these latter days with boots at £3 10s. per pair and decent tea—their main luxury—unobtainable from the remote merchant, and oatmeal—their staple necessity—maintained at a fictitious price to please the farmer, instead of being subsidised as is flour to stop the mouth of the voter. Remember, gamekeepers are not a necessity, and thus cannot dictate terms through a union or hold up the country. There is one other point I would like you to be clear upon : some shooters always carry their gun at "safe" until the moment of discharge, when almost automatically the thumb presses forward the safety-bolt. This may be, and probably is, a desirable habit to acquire, but on no account whatever should it be made an excuse for treating the gun otherwise than if the bolt were at "danger." In other words, "safe" or not, always carry the weapon as if safety-bolts had not been invented. The correct position is on the shoulder, triggers uppermost, grip on the "small" or the heel plate according to whether a shot is expected or not. Always look through the barrels before loading ; avoid packing the gun in a soft cover below or among others in car or carriage. Neglect of this rule results sooner or later in dints, which require skilled "tapping up," a process which leaves a weak spot. A well known gunmaker with whom I once discussed these dints and their treatment, attributed the frequency of their infliction to the careless "chucking," by "gentlemen's gentlemen," of aluminium shooting seats, *with the projecting discs attached*, on to the priceless pile of weapons. The safest covers for carrying guns at full length or "assembled" are made of stout sole leather, the price of which per square foot at the moment is practically prohibitive.

VI.

THE WOULD-BE STALKER.

MANY books have been written on deer-stalking; one or two of them excellent and worth your perusal. My recollection of them as a whole is that all pre-suppose not only total ignorance on the part of the would-be stalker (in which they are possibly right), but also his inability to master the rudiments of the art or science, or combination of both; and in this the various authors seem to take too much for granted, for there is no reason why any boy who begins early and under the best tuition should not ultimately develop into a passable amateur stalker, provided—with a big "P"—that he is reasonably endowed with powers of observation, activity—physical and mental—eyesight, patience, and that indefinable "sense of locality."

It is of no use going to the forest to practise rifle shooting. The foundation of proficiency must be laid where mistakes do less harm. There are several types of weapon in the market, each as near perfection as possible; but as finality is not yet in sight, any recommendation of a particular pattern might be put out of date at short notice. Meanwhile it would be difficult to improve on the Mauser .276, with soft-nosed, split-cased bullet. Incidentally, it seems a pity that British makers do not devote some of their skill to evolving a satisfactory single-shot weapon of this class, *i.e.*, minus the cumbrous magazine, pregnant with temptation. But, whatever the rifle selected, the importance of accuracy and familiarity with your weapon *before* going to the hill cannot be too strongly emphasised. However perfect your performances at the target may be, your first few attempts at the real thing will be handicapped by such considerations as light, position (the former of which is always, and the

latter often beyond your control), anxiety and various influences arising from physical exertion or discomfort. Therefore, school yourself to shooting well in other than selected postures. Judging distance is of less vital importance in these days of flat trajectories, but you should satisfy yourself as to the so-called point blank range of your rifle. Ascertain by experiment, *e.g.*, with the 200yds. sight up, how high at 100yds. and how low at 300yds. the bullet strikes. Beyond the latter distance never fire at deer. Before leaving the subject of shooting at a mark let me warn you against trusting in bullseye accuracy. There are no bullseyes painted on deer. If there were, there would be practically no misses or miss-hits, and very soon no deer. Imagining the bullseye, or spot you wish the bullet to strike, is half the battle. Put up a box, say, 3ft. by 2ft., and imagine the exact "heart." You will thus be less at sea when the sights are aligned on a live beast. Hinds are usually recommended as the next step. A miss here does not spell calamity. You may get several chances in a day. The light, too, is generally bad in the hind season: even if there is snow on the ground the hind presents an appearance so homogeneous as to emphasise the necessity of imagining the desired spot. But, except in cases where wholesale reduction is necessary or where the stock of hinds is sufficient to warrant the policy of killing "milk" hinds and their calves, the selection will be beyond your judgment till you have had considerable experience; and the best hinds, *i.e.*, those which have lost or slipped their calves, are always the most difficult of approach. Roe make the best practice of all; killed at the only season when they are much in evidence, *i.e.*, just before or during the rut which takes place early in August, according to locality. For a week or two previous to and during this mating season—a short one—the bucks show in the more open parts of the wood, and can often be seen nosing after the does. Their stalking is necessarily a rapid business, so restless are they from sexual causes and so apt to be driven by the flies into dark and cool cover. Your Mauser or other rifle will spoil the meat considerably, but the roe does not reach his best from a culinary point of view till late autumn, when

his flesh is almost unequalled. The use of a much less powerful rifle is desirable for another reason, *i.e.*, safety to stray humans; but you want to acquire confidence in your stalking weapon proper. Use it therefore with the greatest care. For this wood stalking a binocular or monocular of the prismatic type is far handier than a telescope, the constant adjustment of which absorbs valuable moments. The former can be carried uncased and with focus fixed if necessary by varnish, slung round the neck and resting in the breast pocket. The monocular is particularly handy, and even for open hill stalking can with advantage supplement the telescope for close work; situations often arise when the latter cannot be used with due regard to speed and concealment. On sunny days the glint on the telescope may give you away, while in normal—*i.e.*, wet weather—the monocular will long outlast his big brother. But the "glass" is the proper instrument for spying, and its skilful employment is only less important than that of the rifle, in that you may, and at first must, depute the business to a professional eye: just because that business savours to you of magic, you will be the more anxious to understand something of it. Therefore, familiarise yourself to some extent with the use of the telescope *before* you ever go stalking. Possibly you may have done this already on other, but not nobler, quarry. The professional hill man came to his own in the War, occasioning, it is whispered, no little jealousy on the part of his less long-sighted comrades in arms. To a beginner it is usually difficult to pick up an object of which the position is described to him, and infinitely more so to spot such object at first hand; while even this difficulty is as nothing compared to the task of making sure of your ground preparatory to a stalk, *i.e.*, satisfying yourself that no tip of horn or ear betrays the presence of a deer either in your path or on some vantage ground commanding your line of approach; and it is from the deer *lying down*, particularly some motionless hind, assimilating in colour so hopelessly with the colour of her background, that you have most to fear: no question of feeding interrupts her vigil. Not very many stalks are spoilt by the beast *actually stalked* spotting the enemy. Do not draw the stalker's

attention to some object which looks to you like a deer unless you are certain. If he is good at his job he will probably have spotted with his "bare eye," as he calls it, any beast you have laboriously discovered through your glass. Remember also that he is as familiar with his beat and with every suspicious-looking stone or tussock thereon as you are with your hearthrug or favourite putting green.

Apart from rifle and glass, there is but little room for advice as to equipment. Please yourself about the colour of your clothes, provided it is neutral and inconspicuous on all sorts of ground. Counsel of perfection, this; but grey of some kind most nearly answers the purpose. Remember that, though it may be a fine warm morning outside the sheltered lodge, you may have a long wait in the mist at 3,000ft. It is best to err on the side of warmth. Mackintoshes, luncheon cases, etc., fall under the category of "luggage on the hill," which gives trouble, and should be left behind. Conservatism demands a cover for your rifle, which would be of use were a waterproof one obtainable, but frowns upon a detachable sling, the comfort of which you will appreciate on a long walk or ride home. A stick, long and strong, and a case to hold ten spare cartridges will be required. The latter, plus lunch and flask, put in your *own* pocket. Separation from the gillie is not improbable, and you may not care about lunching off "straight" liver, toasted on a cleaning-rod, an expedient to which I was once driven about dusk on a December afternoon. You can fill the flask with the modern apology for whisky, or with rum, which is better on a cold day; but do not drink either, or more water than you can help, till the main business of the day is over. There are certain parts of the Highlands where adders are undesirably plentiful, lying coiled up on dry tussocks in the "flow" ground, where the necessary crawling may result in a bite. A tiny receptacle holding tablets of permanganate of potash, for instant application to the bitten part, takes up but little space, and can be carried in the hollow butt with which most modern rifles are provided. You will probably never require the remedy, but a bite might lay you up for days.

I had almost forgotten a few words of advice on sighting the rifle. Avoid the deep and narrow V, obliterating most of the object. Choose a *very* shallow and wide notch, and let your foresight be the smallest you can see in a bad light. The notch should have a vertical platinum line down its centre, and the foresight a rear surface of silver solder. Enamel is even better, but is too easily knocked off. The aperture backsight is the easier to use, in the form of a ring with fairly large opening. The pierced disc sold as an aperture sight is useless except on the target. The aperture sight can be dovetailed behind the bolt-head in the Mauser rifle, or fitted to a "claw" above the bolt. The best foresight for use in conjunction is a small bead on a stem, protected by a steel or brass hoop. The telescope sight you should not use so long as your eye remains sufficiently elastic to focus without it.

Learn how to "gralloch" a stag yourself: it is interesting and may be useful in the event of separation. Get the stalker to show you how to knot the gullet, scrape up the tallow, wash the "poch-buie," etc. Should you be alone and have to leave a stag a night on the hill, tie a piece of paper to his horn, spread some grass on him, weighted with a stone, to keep off vermin, and bend his head under him on the *left* side, before the neck stiffens, for it is thus he must be arranged on the pony next day.

You will learn more about stalking in your first day on the forest than I could tell you on paper in a week, especially if accompanied by a stalker possessed of the knowledge of the old school minus its autocratic methods. Some of these older men used positively to delight in refusing to disclose their reasons for orders and acts incomprehensible to the learner. They loved doing things in their own way, unopposed and unquestioned: their "gentleman," poor soul, was regarded—no doubt often rightly—as a nuisance till the actual shot was to be taken, and even then he was often handicapped by his attendant, or rather his master, inserting his own person into the one position from which this was possible. Deer were less plentiful, shooters limited in number, and content, in the Victorian manner, to leave details to employés. The stalker was credited with omniscience,

just as, later on, was the chauffeur. Nowadays, the shooter and the car-owner like to know the why and the wherefore. But the increased numbers of deer (I am writing of conditions before the war, and before the casualties of the present winter had occurred), combined with the greater accuracy and longer range of modern rifles, have tended to make the younger generation of stalker much less careful in his methods. The difficulties condensed into those last hundred yards can be cut out altogether: a lying stag can be "taken" in the neck, without the weary wait till he rises: the report no longer clears a whole countryside, as in the days of black powder: less time need be spent on care, for failure can be subsequently atoned for. But, for all his faults, or the faults of his age, the modern stalker has advantages for his raw pupil: he does not treat the latter as a fool, incapable of learning that certain causes are followed by certain effects, and recognises the fact that most of us are willing to make ourselves uncomfortable if furnished with a reason for doing so. But do not let these observations deter you from obeying instructions for which no reason is forthcoming. Take the reason for granted: there is not always time for explanations. For instance, when "crawling in" to the firing-point, under orders to imitate the stalker's *ventre-à-terre* advance, do not, just because you see the backs of the deer, feeding and unsuspicious, raise your head to get a glimpse of the stag. Ten to one there is a hind on sentry duty, and your premature curiosity will result in your being "picked up," and all your toil and time wasted.

Remember that, on the hill, no episode is self-contained nor isolated, nor barren of results. One hind rashly disturbed may ruin your beat for the day. Effects of disturbance are terribly cumulative. Though the wind is the medium on which deer chiefly rely for news, the eyesight of *individual* deer is far keener than some people suppose. The glint of a rifle-barrel or glass is detected at incredible distances. Sounds, also, *e.g.*, of falling stones or crowing grouse, arouse suspicions which even time and patience fail to allay. Perhaps the most trying moments, or hours, in a day's stalking are those spent in inaction. The tedium of a long

wait in the mist can be relieved by watching the effect of the wind striking different points and corries: the resulting eddies will teach you a good deal.

Advice as to "keeping cool" may seem superfluous, but do not deceive yourself into underestimating the difficulty of doing so. Even your professional attendant is apt to be moved by his Celtic fervour towards persuading you to try a shot whose result, if successful, could only be a fluke. An arduous stalk may disclose your stag walking away "end on": once over that ridge, you will not see him again to-day, for it is growing dark. But restrain yourself: the odds are in favour of his halting on the ridge for a last look behind him, giving you an easy broadside chance. Even if he does not, the very lateness of the hour should make you thankful that you did not risk a shot which might have sent a noble beast to die a lingering death. A miss would have mattered less, but would have marred the pleasure of your homeward journey and the memory of a day otherwise, perhaps, flawless. And these recollections of stalking days—apart from the death of stags—are something worth carrying home. Tired you may be, and footsore, hungry, thirsty, wet; but you have had a glimpse of the sublime. He who has sat, a human atom among the chaos of rocks on the summit of Carn Eige, nearly 4,000ft. from the not far distant sea, and watched the mist being sucked by the sun off peak after peak, ridge after ridge, unveiling all that is fairest in Scotland, bears away with him a treasure which neither time can tarnish, failing eyesight obscure, nor Chancellor of the Exchequer steal away.

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